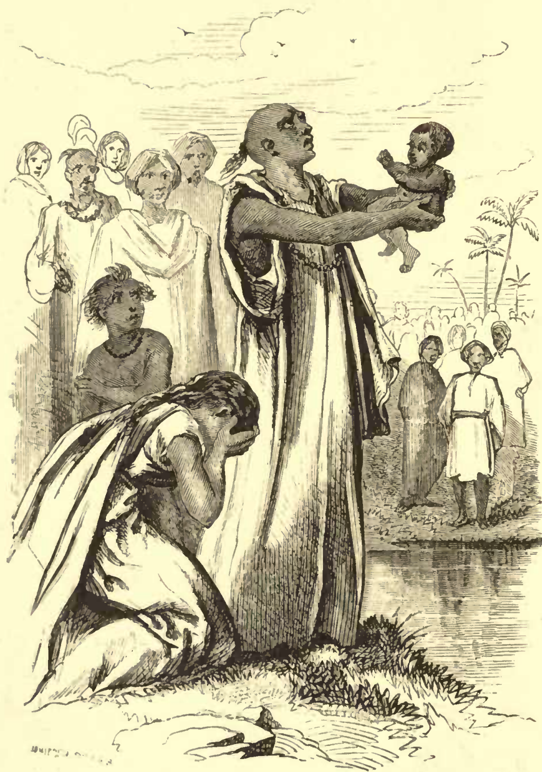

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"O, Great Gunga! take it; it is thine!"

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LIFE BY THE GANGES.

OR

FAITH AND VICTORY.

BY

THE LATE MRS. MULLENS,

OF CALCUTTA.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

Westcott & Thomson,
Stereotypers. Philada.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

It is with no ordinary satisfaction that we give to the American public this unique book, a book which could scarce have been written save by its author. The daughter of one of the noblest of men, the Swiss Missionary Lacroix, she was from childhood intimate with the language, the habits, the ideas of the people of Bengal. As the wife of the eminent Dr. Mullens of Calcutta, and his enthusiastic colaborer, she made diligent use of her rare opportunities for penetrating the recesses of the Hindoo home, that she might bless the inmates of the Zen̆ana. Hence her ability to lift the veil, and, combining imagination with knowledge and fact, to give us an inside view of a Bengalee home of high rank, and of the bitter conflicts through which its inmates emerge into the light and liberty of Christian life.

The book was written, primarily, to be read by the people of Bengal in their own tongue. To undergo this ordeal it must be true to life. The writer therefore subjected it to the criticism of two Bengalee gentlemen. The reader thus has the satisfaction of knowing that whilst he is profoundly interested he is also instructed. Oriental sketches generally abound in the most gross absurdities.

Here we have one that will be recognized as true by the Hindoo reader. If it be open to a criticism, it is that, written thus for Hindoo readers, it touches lightly upon some of the darker features of Hindoo life.

In the prime of life, and in the midst of uncommon usefulness, whilst her tale of "Faith and Victory" was still incomplete, the hand of the writer was stayed by death. The manuscript was completed by her family from the outline which she left.

The book having been prepared for the Bengalees contained, as originally published, matter less needful for American readers. Some of the chapters on this account have been abridged, and brief explanatory notes have been introduced, where it seemed needful for the information of those not familiar with Indian terms. The illustrations also have been added by the American Publishers, there being none in the English edition.

To the editor, the memory of a week spent under the kindly roof of Dr. and Mrs. Mullens in Calcutta, and in the midst of the work to which they were devoted, has rendered the revision and publication of this volume a most grateful task.

JOHN W. DULLES.

PHILADELPHIA, *March*, 1867.

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Life by the Ganges.



CHAPTER I.

TO the Hindoo, few spots are so sacred as the sterile and dismal islet of Saugor. Here the heaven-descended and divine Ganges meets and mingles its turbid stream with the salt waters of the Bay of Bengal. To bathe in this holy stream, at this spot, has become one of the highest acts of Hindoo piety.

It was in the depth of the rainy season, in the month of January, many years since, that thousands were gathered on Saugor Island. Delicate females and tender babes had been exposed, in open boats, to the damp chills of a season which to them is peculiarly trying. Many had spent their little all, and were now starving. Here was a man dying, unnoticed and alone; while the wild vulture was greedily watching the extinction of

the last spark of life in his feeble frame, to make him the prey of her own hungry brood. There again, was raised a funeral pile, and as the sons set fire to the corpse of her who had given them birth, they rejoiced over her good fortune in dying at that sacred spot on that sacred day. The harsh monotonous sound of the conch-shell, the wailing of the pilgrim women, and the loud din of barbarous music, rent the air.

The beach was crowded with boats of every shape and form, and the barren sands, which showed one mass of human heads, were covered with long lines of temporary booths. They were erected of the frailest materials, of matting and bamboo, ornamented with flaunting flags of scarlet and gold; but the richness of their contents formed a matter of surprise to the casual spectator. Everything was to be procured there, from the most costly Persian satins, to the common smoking pipe of the Bengalee; and everything purchased in those booths was precious, for it was a mela or religious fair that we describe.

That such festivities should be celebrated on such a spot, amidst the haunts of tigers, may well astonish all but those who are acquainted with

the strange vagaries of Hindooism; for excepting on the three days in January when the fair is held, nothing is to be seen the whole year round, but the broad sea in the distance, and the dense jungle above the shore.

But amid these thousands of devotees, one man was seen from a distant land and of a different race. As he wandered amid the vast crowd, and saw them wholly given to idolatry, the soul of the Christian Missionary was filled with deepest melancholy. God was dishonored; and as he stood on that secluded islet, a herald of the Most High, he felt the fearful responsibility that was laid on him. He spoke, therefore, as a dying man to dying men; with every word that dropped from his lips, his eyes looked upward for Heaven's blessing; with every tract or book he gave away, he breathed a prayer that God's word might not return unto Him void. He spoke first to one, and then to another, of Jesus' love to perishing sinners; but in return for his affectionate entreaty, the enraged idolaters refused to listen. They threw dirt and stones in his face; he was beaten and reviled; till at last worn out and dispirited, he closed his book and walked away in silence.

The heathen riumphed in their victory; they did not know the mighty weapon which that man of God was wielding against their superstition as he turned away from them and wept. They did not hear him exclaim—"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered." They did not hear him wrestling with the Father for the fulfilment of His promise to His beloved Son—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." But He that sitteth in the heavens did hear it, and even then He had prepared a blessing which was about to descend on His servant's labor of love, although that faithful servant knew not of it until he had sat down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of his Master.

As the missionary walked along, his attention was attracted by an interesting little group, and he could not help following them as they entered the modern temple of Kupil Muni. This was a small quadrangular building, about two hundred yards inshore, contemptible in its outward appearance, and very inferior to the original structure, which has long since been washed away by the sea. The little party that now entered consisted

of a Brahmin lady and her two sons; one was a beautiful boy, about twelve years old, and the other, an infant of a few months. Two female servants followed, who, as well as the mother, were weeping bitterly. After prostrating themselves three times in front of the temple, the lady and her children made their way to the Mohonto, or high priest, who was seated a little behind a rnde stone figure of the sage Kupila. As the Brahminee approached the high priest, she presented him with a gold cow, on a beautiful muslin handkerchief embroidered with silver; the elder boy in his turn laid at his feet several yards of the finest silk, and then the mother's trembling hand held open that of her babe, while the avaricious priest took from the unconscious child the silver bells, which till now had adorned his little feet. This rite, which seemed to afford exquisite delight to the Mohonto, being completed, he dismissed them with his blessing, and the sorrowful group wended their way with thousands of others to the principal bathing-place, situated at the southern extremity of the fair. Here four priests joined the party. At the sight of them the Brahminee uttered a loud shriek, and fell sense-

less on the cold ground; but she was supported by her female attendants, and literally carried to the water's edge. Here a great crowd was assembled. The chief Brahmin then took the lovely infant from the arms of its elder brother, anointed its little body with oil, vermillion, and saffron, dressed it in red and yellow muslin, and then began to utter over its devoted head charms and incantations.

Our missionary looked on with most painful anxiety. The idea of the horrid crime they were about to perpetrate had just flashed across his mind, and he determined, in God's strength, to prevent the cruel sacrifice, if in any way it lay in his power. He knew that the Governor-General of India, during the previous month of August, had forbidden the drowning of children at Saugor, under the severest penalties. But the law had never yet been enforced, and for him, single-handed, to insist on it, in defiance of the priests and of the crowd who were standing in eager expectation of gloating their eyes on this spectacle, would have been madness itself. He remembered that somewhere in the fair must be the body of armed sepoys which the Government had sent to

the island for the prevention of this crime. The idea flashed on his mind that they might arrive too late; that ere he could return, the child might already be in the jaws of some hungry alligator. But these conflicting emotions brought no delay. Trusting in God, and earnestly praying that something might occur to protract the ceremony, the missionary rushed away in search of the men who alone had power to save the child.

In the meantime, the baby having been prepared for the sacrifice, the Brahmin priests tried to rouse the insensible mother. She at length opened her eyes; but remembering what was going forward, she sank back, exclaiming, "Is there nothing that can save my child?" "No," said the Brahmin who expected the largest fee for performing the inhuman rite, "No; you have vowed to give him up, and your vow must be performed; yet the gods require a willing sacrifice. Do you consent? Say so, and let the goddess take her own." "No, no," exclaimed the agonized mother, "I do not consent. If I fail to perform my vow, I can only be accurst; let then the curse alight; death is preferable to this!"

"Yes," said the enraged priest, "the curse shall

alight indeed, not on you, however, but on that lad there," pointing to her elder boy; "it shall alight on the apple of your eye, on the darling of your heart, to save whose life you made this vow; and now you dare to retract it! Woman, know that the goddess Gunga* has cursed you; that I have cursed you; and that unless you make the promised sacrifice, you shall return home on the morrow, taking your worthless infant with you, it is true, but leaving the ashes of your noble boy, the stay of your house, smouldering on the funeral pile. Woman, do you still refuse?"

But no answer was returned; agony prevented the utterance of words.

"Then wave your hand, in token that I may throw your babe into the sea, if you cannot speak," said the impatient Brahmin.

The desired signal was given, and the people raised a shout of victory. The priest then, taking the child in his arms, repeated the following dedication:—"Last year, O great Gunga, the mother of this babe, then unborn, vowed that she would give it to thee if thou wouldst cure her eldest son of the dangerous illness with which he

* The river Ganges, esteemed a goddess by the Hindoos

was afflicted. This thou didst do, and now she has brought thee her infant. Take it; it is thine." Tne babe was thrown; one little splash was heard; but the next instant the mother had it safe on her bosom once more! Frantic with grief, she had plunged in and rescued it.

"No, no, Gunga shall not have him," she cried. "I was mad, quite mad, when I made that vow. I thought that my child would have been a daughter. If it had been so, perhaps I could have given it up; but my boy! no, never! I will not, cannot see my baby boy drowned before my eyes."

Again the Brahmin menaced her more severely than before; again (for superstition was strong within her, as well as maternal love) she was induced to yield, when at that critical moment, just as the priest was in the act of throwing the babe for the second time into the sea, his arm was arrested by the missionary; while the foremost of the band of sepoys, who had followed him in breathless haste, struck the wretch on the head, for daring to commit the unnatural murder, after he had heard the proclamation forbidding it. The intimidated priest got off as well as he could; the

crowd fled after him, and soon the missionary, the sepoys, and the now rejoicing family were left alone. The poor mother fell at the feet of the missionary, whose very touch at any other time she would have considered pollution, and almost worshipped him. "Thank you, thank you a thousand times, sir," she exclaimed; "you have delivered my darling; you have made his mother's heart rejoice. Oh, how could I have lived without my baby. I can do nothing for you, sir; but the God of the universe will reward you. I will continually pray to our deities to send you their blessing. You shall have seven sons; your riches shall increase; your honor shall increase; you shall have an inkstand of gold, and write with a pen of pure silver."

But at that instant a shade of anxious sadness passed over the face of the half rejoicing, half trembling woman, while she timidly turned to the sepoys, and said:—"I had forgotten the Brahmin's curse. Must I indeed leave my Mohendro, my first-born, here on this barren island, burning on his funeral pyre, as the priest predicted? Oh, wretched mother that I am, is there no way of saving one child without sacrificing the other?"

The sepoys, themselves Hindoos, were quite moved at her grief-stricken countenance. "No, no," they exclaimed, "Mohendro will not die. You have consented to perform your vow, but we forcibly prevented you. If, then, Gunga be so revengeful, which, indeed, we cannot believe, then her curse will alight on us, not on you or yours."

A gleam of hope lighted up the bewildered features of the mother, while she said to her female attendants, "Come, Dásee and Tára, let us go to our boat, and leave this horrible place at once. The gods grant that I may never see it again."

"O lady," answered the women, "do not talk so; it is a holy place; have not the Shastres* said so? Retract your saying, lady; retract it, or our boat will perish in the waters; the gods will never let us reach home in safety."

"Well," said the Brahminee, "may they forgive me for my hasty language. I meant no ill to them, but no one can tell what I have suffered at this holy place; and ah, women, if you were shocked at my wishing never to return here, what

* Holy Books.

would you say to a dreadful, dreadful thought which I had concerning our goddess, a thought that would force itself upon me when the Brahmin declared that Gunga would destroy Mohendro if I did not give up to her my darling little Rajendro. But I will not pollute your minds with the impiety of that thought. No mortal ear shall ever hear it, but I will atone for it by fastings, and prayers, and gifts."

The party took a kindly leave of each other; but as the mother with her children wended her way to the place where they had left their boat, a sudden thought flashed across the mind of the missionary; it seemed almost to come to him with the force of inspiration. "Stop, Mohendro, stop," said he to the boy, "here is a book for you; will you promise not to destroy it, and to read it when you are able?" The missionary handed to him his own copy of the Bengalee New Testament, which had been printed at Serampore only two years before.

But the boy shrank from it, as from a polluted thing, and looked to his mother for counsel. "Take it, Mohendro," she said, "take it; will you

offend the Sahib* after he has saved your brother's life? But sir," she exclaimed, turning to the missionary, "I know his father will not let him read any Christian book; however, one thing I can promise, that for your sake it shall never be destroyed."

"Thanks for that promise at least," said the man of God, "but if you only knew what it contained, how you would delight that your children should read it. It tells of a sinless Being, Jesus Christ, who has made atonement for the sins of the whole world by shedding His own precious blood and bearing the penalty of sin, which is death. Oh, if you trusted in Him, and relied on Him alone, for the forgiveness of all your transgressions, you would not need to come here to bathe in these waters; they do not purify your soul. Our God is a Sea of Love, and rather than sinful men should perish in the vain endeavor to work out their own salvation, He sent His own Son to die for them, the just for the unjust. The God described in this book would never have asked your baby of you, for the whole earth is His, and the fulness thereof. He wants your

* *Sahib*, Lord, Gentleman.

heart alone. If with your whole heart alone you love and trust Him, you are saved eternally."

These words sounded strangely in the ears of the Brahmin woman, and were strongly impressed on her memory. Though so ignorant of anything beyond her own system of crueltv and superstition that they failed to convey any meaning to her mind, yet she thought over them, repeated them to herself, and seemed perplexed, till at last, turning suddenly to the missionary, she hastily bade him good-bye, saying, "Oh, sir, I should nct be listening to such words as yours. What would Mohendro's father* say if he knew that I had been giving ear to them even for a single moment?" And the woman went on her way.

What good had been done? A little precious seed sown, and one copy of the sacred Scriptures bestowed on individuals who would not even promise to peruse its life-giving truths; a copy of the sacred Scriptures bestowed, merely to become a part of household rubbish, to be disregarded and condemned! But the missionary returned to his boat, with a heart filled with grati-

* A Hindoo woman does not speak the name of her husband.

tude to God, for having enabled him to be the means of introducing into the family of a Hindoo priest even a single copy of the word that maketh wise unto salvation.

The mother with her children went on their way in their boat, ascending the river towards their home, which they reached, after journeying five days. The Brahminee looked forward to meeting her lord with a strange mixture of joy and fear. At one time she trembled lest he should spurn her from his presence, as an impious, or at best a weak-minded creature, lacking courage to perform a solemn vow, which yet she had had the hardihood to make. At another time, she would fain believe that his better nature would prevail; that his paternal feelings would come to her aid, and that she would be freely forgiven. With an anxious heart, therefore, she entered the house, having taken care to conceal her sleeping child in the folds of her muslin drapery, in order that she might judge how and at what time it might be best to reveal to her husband-lord the secret, that he was the father of a living babe still. But the precaution was unnecessary. The old Brahmin was engaged in

performing his noon-devotions, during which time his wife and servants well knew he never suffered them to interrupt him. He had finished the Siva worship, and had just begun his auhik or invocation of household gods, when he overheard Mohendro telling an old nurse of the wonderful things he had seen at the Saugor fair. The austere priest was a man after all, and it was therefore not surprising that he hurried through the concluding prayers and went hastily into his wife's apartment to learn the actual fate of their darling. His wife met him with a calm, almost smiling face, which evidently puzzled him.

"And so," he exclaimed, "Gunga has taken our babe! O Mohendro's mother, how can you stand there and look so calm after having committed your child to the deep! Well, the gods be praised for so supporting you. They have not been equally gracious to me. Miserable, very miserable have I been for the last ten days. Do you know that twice I sent messengers after you with a bag of five thousand rupees ($2.500), to request you to bring back the child and to give away the money instead, that so the goddess might be appeased? But twice I recalled them,

thinking that our house would be accurst forever if we refused what we had vowed. Yes, it is better as it is. I am glad that you have given him up," exclaimed the weeping Brahmin, "for the wrath of the gods is a fearful thing; but oh! Mohendro's mother, I cannot love you the more for wearing this calm, nay cheerful countenance; it seems so cold, so unnatural, that I shrink from meeting your gaze. How is it, woman, speak!"

The moment had arrived when her silence must be broken; when her secret must be revealed; and she fell at the feet of her husband, exclaiming, "Oh, if he had been sacrificed, do you think I could have lived to tell the tale? No, no, our baby is not dead, I have brought him back, he sleeps peacefully in his cradle."

"How!" said the trembling father, "and the curse! Were you not afraid of the curse? It will surely alight; O woman, woman! what have you done?"

"Pause one moment ere you condemn me," urged his wife, and then she related to him all the circumstances connected with the rescue of her darling from a watery grave, save only her conversation with the missionary; and the father

listened with a bounding heart and glistening eyes, exclaiming at the end, as he rushed into an adjoining apartment to embrace the little lost one, "Yes, yes, those sepoys were right; Gunga will not visit us with her vengeance."

After Mohendro and the father had partaken of their breakfast, a meal which a strict Hindoo never touches until he has performed his noon Poojah* and the worship of his household god, the old man said to his son, "Well, boy, and what have you brought home with you in remembrance of Gunga Saugor?" Mohendro ran off to his mother, who, although faint and tired, had waited to begin her breakfast until her husband had finished. She was just going to sit down to it when her son exclaimed, "Oh! mother, let me have all the things we brought from Gunga Saugor; father wishes to see them." The mother, forgetting the New Testament, threw her keys to Mohendro, saying, "Open the green trunk we took with us, and you will find all; only do not call me away to assist you while I am getting my breakfast; I am hungry, and if I once leave my

* Poojah, worship.

food you know it would be unclean, and contrary to the Shastres to return to it."

The Brahminee had carefully avoided telling her husband about her conversation with the missionary and the possession of the New Testament, knowing how displeased he would be with her for listening to words spoken against their own ancient religion, and more especially for polluting her hands with the touch of a Christian book. Mohendro, however, now ran to him with the Testament among his other treasures.

"Here, father," he said, "is a little vessel full of water taken from the junction of the Ganges and the sea; mother says if we preserve it carefully it will bring us many blessings. And here are some Bél leaves and Hibiscus flowers which I took out of the water after they had been offered; and here is a beautiful box which mother bought for her jewels; and here is a little silk dress for myself, and a muslin one for you." The boy was going to proceed, when the father glancing at the New Testament suddenly stopped him, saying, "And there is another Ramayan* I declare, as if three copies were not sufficient. Mohendro, what

*Ramayan—a favorite poem of the Hindoos.

made your mother buy that?" Mohendro at once remembered that his mother wished to conceal the possession of the Testament from his father; he saw his mistake in bringing it forward, and with all the tact and cunning of a Bengalee boy, brought up without any regard to truth, he immediately said, (at the same time taking the book in his own hand to prevent discovery), "Yes, father, it is a Ramayan for uncle; he gave mother the money for it before she went, saying he would like to possess a copy bought at the Gunga Saugor Mela."

After saying this, away ran Mohendro with the book, to disclose to his mother his artful stratagem, From her he received his due meed of praise, as she carefully put the precious volume into a safe place of concealment, saying, "Well, come what may, I will keep my promise to that good man; his book shall not be destroyed."

The mother and the son little thought that the volume they were preserving with so much care would be the means of producing in their own household the greatest calamity (in their opinion) that ever befell a Hindoo family.

CHAPTER II.

MORE than forty years have passed since the events occurred which are related in the preceding chapter. We have now to introduce our readers to the same dwelling indeed, but to scenes, oh! how changed! Mohendro's father, the bigoted old Brahmin priest, has long since gone to his last account. His wife, more than thirty years his junior, still lives, and, if we except all the privations which, as a widow, she must undergo, seems to be spending her declining days in happiness and quiet. The boy Mohendro has, here and there, a white hair on his head; he is now the chief stay of the house, enjoying his ancestral property, and generously supporting with it a numerous circle of dependent and indigent relatives. Mohendro married in due time, and his wife has given birth to four sons and a daughter. Three of these young men also, in their turn, have already entered the married state; the

fourth is a lad at college, and the daughter is a beautiful bright little girl, six years of age, the pet of the whole household.

In character Mohendro very much resembled his father. Like him, he was an austere man, and paid as great regard to the requirements of Hindooism as the old man did. The fondest wish of his heart was to see his sons imitate his example in this one particular at least, veneration for the religion of their fathers. But in this he was doomed to severe disappointment. With the exception of his eldest son, Surjo Kumár, none of the others paid any regard to the subject. Chondro Kumár, the second son, a wild dissipated youth, used openly to deride his father's reverence for stocks and stones; and it had even been asserted, though that might have been only a rumor, that he had so far departed from the strict requirements of Hindooism, as to eat and drink with other young men of his own lax principles, that which was forbidden by the Shastres.

Prosonno Kumár, the brother next in age to Chondro, was a very different character. Any stranger might have marked, in his finely-chiselled, pale, and melancholy face, the incipient

consumption that was preying on his vitals; but it did not seem to have struck him, or any of his family, that he might not be long for this world. Of a highly intellectual and reflective cast of mind, Prosonno Kumár was deeply solicitous on all subjects connected with religion. He had examined the system of Hindooism, as it was practiced by his father and other Brahmins of the old school, and had long since rejected it as being a monstrous mixture of puerile absurdities, gross impurity, and falsehood. Modern Brahmism, as inculcated by the teachers of the Bráhmo Samáj,* proved a far more powerful enemy to his search after truth; he was fascinated by its plausible reasonings and curious speculations; it opened to him, a wide field for philosophical research; he was pleased with its brief code of morals and the spirituality of its worship, till, glad in any way to escape from Puránic Hindooism, he had eagerly professed himself a Brahmist, and commenced, in all sincerity of purpose, to

* A society of Hindoo deistic reformers. Brahmism, their deistic faith, must not be confounded with Brahminism, the system of the idolatrous Brahmins. The Brahmists take their title from Brahm, the Supreme Being.

endeavor, by prayer, study, and meditation, to obtain that knowledge of the Supreme Being, which, according to the Brahmist school, is the only needful way of salvation. Still he seemed restless and unhappy.

Things were in this state when, one fine evening in June, Prosonno called to his youngest and favorite brother to accompany him in a walk. "Are you going to the Samáj, brother?" asked Nobo Kumár, the youngest of the four brothers, when they had got outside the house.

"No, Nobo," replied Prosonno, "I am going to do something which our family would disapprove of, and therefore I did not mention it in their presence; but I think I may trust you with my secret,—may I not?"

"Oh, yes, brother, that you may," replied the lad; "I will never betray you; do I not love you better than all the world beside?"

"Well, then," said Prosonno, "I am going to meet the Christian Rám Doyal, with whom we became acquainted the other day, and discuss religious questions with him. The Bible is to be his standard. I am going armed at all points to fight for Brahmism; and Heaven grant that our

religion may stand the test of truth. But somehow, Nobo, I am disappointed in it. It has not imparted to me the happiness I sought."

"Oh, brother!" said the lad, "that is because you have not yet been able wholly to fulfil all the requirements of Brahmism. Our cousin told me some time since that we ought not to expect rest or peace until we can, with a clear conscience, take our rules of faith in our hands, and say, all this I have kept."

"And can he say that, Nobo?" asked Prosonno.

"Yes," replied Nobo; "he says he can."

"Alas! then," said his brother, "our views of the requirements of our religion differ most widely. Is not forgiveness constantly inculcated and extolled? Is it not said to be 'the highest wealth, the excellence of the weak, the ornament of the strong?' And yet, did we not hear, the other day, of a most shameful quarrel between our cousin and his father-in-law? How did he reconcile that with his conscience? No, no, Nobo; it is more difficult than he thinks for us to fulfil a pure moral law; that is the very thing that discourages me. I find myself every hour

falling into sin. But here is Rám Doyal; let us go into the house with him."

The young men saluted each other courteously, and Nobo reluctantly followed. In his own mind he wished his brother safe at the Bráhma Samáj; but he was too sincerely attached to him either to thwart his wishes or betray his purpose. Rám Doyal immediately set two seats for his visitors, and after placing a bright lamp on the table, he brought his Bible, and sat down with them.

It was such a meeting as the angels love to look upon. Before commencing their deliberations, the Christian asked permission to say a few words of prayer to the God he adored. This request was courteously complied with by his heathen friends. Rám Doyal then stood up, and lifting up his heart to heaven said, "Blessed Fountain of Wisdom, Light, Life, and Happiness, do Thou shine into our hearts. Teach us Thy whole will. Tell us what is acceptable service, and give us grace to follow in the path Thou shalt open up to us, that it may lead us to Life Eternal. This we ask, not in our own name, but in the name of Thy beloved Son, Christ Jesus, who has made atonement for our sins."

Whether the heathen young men at that time entered into the spirit of this prayer, we cannot tell, but in after years, Prosonno often said, that he never forgot it. The words so exactly expressed his own spiritual want, that afterwards, before opening the Bible, or any book on the subject of religion, he used involuntarily to employ the language of his Christian friend's supplication, "Blessed Fountain of Wisdom, Light, Life, and Happiness, shine into my heart."

On the present occasion he commenced the conversation by saying: "Well, Rám Doyal, you have been a Brahmist yourself but gave up your membership; will you kindly mention a few of your reasons for abandoning that religion, and afterwards tell us your reasons for embracing Christianity?"

"The first and chief cause of my becoming dissatisfied with Brahmism," replied Rám Doyal, "was that in it I found no atonement for sin."

"But," said Nobo Kumár, "you must not argue as a Christian, Rám Doyal; you ought to meet us on common ground; we deny altogether the necessity of an atonement, at least such a one as cannot be made by man himself."

"Well," said Rám Doyal, "we agree on the character of God, at least in most points. You say He is wisdom, eternity, joy, and goodness personified, the fountain of holiness, the punisher of sin. We say the same. Now in what light do you suppose this pure Being, fountain of holiness and truth, regards all our sins and evil deeds? Do they not deserve His anger? Ought He not, in accordance with His own character as the punisher of sin, to reward us according to our deserts? Some instances of sin, though only between fellow-creatures, merit suffering as a penalty; this few will deny. Now suppose we extend this view to the whole universe, including its glorious Sovereign; we shall then be convinced that His claims on the affections and obedience of His rational creatures are infinitely superior to those of an earthly parent, or benefactor; that a violation of those claims produces a proportionate criminality; and that any such violation deserves an adequate punishment; or requires a full and perfect satisfaction to the honor and justice of the divine government.

"I do not think either of us will be so unreasonable as to deny that we are sinners. Supposing

this to be granted, the case lies thus: are we able to make to God the necessary satisfaction for His broken laws? If not, is there any other Being willing to do so? If there be no such Being, then we must be content to suffer just punishment for our offences."

"But," said Nobo, "I do not see why it is so impossible for man to make satisfaction for his sins, as you seem to think; can he not do it by meditating on the divine attributes, by repentance and prayer?"

"O Nobo," exclaimed Prosonno, "you have overlooked the point of Rám Doyal's argument; man has sinned against his Creator, his preserver, his benefactor, and for such a transgression, an adequate satisfaction is needed; would you say that mere repentance and prayer would constitute such a satisfaction?"

"You have quite understood my meaning, Prosonno," said Rám Doyal, "and this leads us to another branch of the same argument. Is man able sincerely to repent, that is to say, to forsake sin of his own unaided will?"

Prosonno looked doubtful: he had confessed to his brother, a short time before, that he was un-

able to get rid of the burden of his own daily and hourly offenses; and yet he did not like to leave this stronghold of the self-righteous sinner; so he said: "I think we could all forsake sin, Rám Doyal, if we were always careful in striving against it."

"That, my dear friend, is a complete mistake," continued Rám Doyal. "Does the history of the world show that? Kingdoms and nations that have not enjoyed the Christian revelation have not worked themselves out of sin, but have sunk into deeper and deeper depths. History seems to deny to man the power of self-reformation.

"In addition, in all cases we find increased confusion and ignorance as to what is right and what is wrong: what class of acts are to be reckoned virtuous and what vicious. With all the advantages possessed by Bengalee Deists, even your own system has not been sufficiently explicit in its definitions of vice and virtue. I should like to know exactly what they mean by *sin;* for the Vedas give no moral code; and the few principles of right and wrong that have been inculcated by Ram Mohun Roy and others are very well as far as they go; but whence are they derived?

What is their authority? They are human systems after all, very imperfect, and abound in error."

"Oh! do not say so," said Prosonno; "the Brahmist takes his moral code from the light of nature; his is the natural Religion that the Creator himself has caused to shine in the heart of every man; we cannot have a better guide than that which He has given us."

"I assure you, my dear Prosonno," replied his friend, "that the light of Nature is a very uncertain guide. On many points the teaching of its followers has been at variance with the judgment of mankind: on many points they have disagreed among themselves. On the most momentous question of all, the subject of a FUTURE LIFE, the teaching of Nature only conveys to us what is probable, while the mind of man needs what is *sure.* This uncertainty is seen among the Calcutta Brahmists. One of them, you know, has published a book to prove that there is no future state to man after his death. On account of this uncertainty I was exceedingly dissatisfied with Brahmism.

"Besides, when I came to look at sin, I found

myself ever asking: 'How shall I escape the punishment it deserves? There is a God, almighty, wise, and just; I have broken His law: how can I be saved? who will satisfy that law for me?' I felt that something more was necessary than any repentance or reformation of my own. They look forward to the future. Who shall wipe away the past? I found the need stated, and the question answered, in the Bible. That book I verily believe to be the WORD OF GOD. I have examined its claims, and studied the evidences of its truth, and having done this, I now accept whatever it declares: and whether my poor reason can fully comprehend its doctrines or not, I implicitly believe them. This word declares, 'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.' Christ Jesus is the 'propitiation for our sins.' For 'if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.' With these texts before me," continued Râm Doyal, "you see I can do nothing but totally and entirely reject the system of salvation by works, and cling to that which will confer salvation upon me through the merits of another."

"I see what you mean," said Prosonno, "but while you have been speaking, another thought suggested itself to me; is it right that we, thinking, intellectual beings, should allow ourselves to receive any system that contradicts our reason?

"However, let us both consider this subject until we meet again, and then we shall be able to discuss it fully. In the meantime, go on with your objections against Brahmism; you must not, however, suppose I have consented to the doctrine of an atonement; I had not thought the conversation would take this turn, and therefore find myself unprepared to answer you; but I shall do so the next time we meet."

"And, my dear friend," said Rám Doyal, "I shall pray God, that while you are studying objections against His blessed truth, He may teach you by His own Spirit, that He may make all things clear to you.

"But to continue," said Rám Doyal; "I doubted much about Brahmism when I saw the rapid changes it was undergoing, just as our leaders dictated. At the outset, while the modern idolatrous legends were rejected, and Natural Religion was sought after, the VEDAS, our most an-

cient books, were accepted as books of authority, revealed from heaven, and teaching us divine truth. This gave rise, as you know, to controversies with the missionaries and others; who, among other arguments, objected to the scientific teaching of our books. No one could defend that teaching even amongst ourselves: it only required to be pointed out to be disavowed. In a few years, therefore, the Vedas were given up by our educated young men: regarded, indeed, as most interesting relics of the notions and practices of our forefathers, but not conveying divine truth from the mouth of Brahmá.

"All this made me doubt very much. I asked myself, 'Who are our leaders and teachers; where is true wisdom: what is our authority?' We are being led by changeable and fallible men. Since I left them, another great change has taken place. Not satisfied with the ordinary doctrines of the teaching of Nature, they have recently imported from Europe and America the doctrine of intuitionalism. The soul wants something fixed, some assurance about forgiveness and the future life; but these things made me feel more dissatisfied than ever."

"That was no reason for embracing Christianity," said Prosonno.

"True," replied Rám Doyal. "I became a Christian because of its truth; but I was on the way to it, when I found Brahmism could not satisfy me. It seemed to me that we were like a company of men in a ship without charts, and with a dark sky overhead. Our pilots differed among themselves, and we were wandering we knew not whither.

"Besides, I was much struck with the position taken up by the Brahmists in reference to HINDOO CASTE. Its evils are numerous, its demands are unjust; no other nation in the world is enslaved by it except ourselves: and large numbers of the Brahmists acknowledge it to be an evil thing. Yet I did not find any one ready to adopt plans for getting rid of it.

"It was the same with IDOLATRY. We were all professing a belief that there is one God. Our gods, then, are not gods; they have no existence; their images are images of nothing: and their worship is a lie. It is an insult to that one true God to worship them instead of Him. And yet I saw the Brahmists doing it every day. I had

to do it so long as I remained at home. You have to do it, Prosonno; our friends Kessub and Kasi, and a hundred others, do it, as you know. And so we were all helping to maintain it. We, the educated men of the new generation, who thought ourselves wiser and better than others, were doing our part to uphold idolatry and caste, two of the worst institutions ever maintained in any country of the world.

"I felt ashamed of myself for doing so. I knew we were afraid of our relatives; we respected the opinions and practices of our fathers, but I felt that we ought to respect truth more. We ought to honor God above men, and share in nothing that dishonors Him. I wanted, therefore, to be a MAN in courage and in faithfulness, a follower of truth always, even in peril.

"Feeling this, I read with new interest the story of the New Testament, and found there all my desires strengthened and increased by the example of the early Christians. Gradually I found that in other things Christ, who had put these thoughts in me, satisfied all my wants. I followed the truth He taught me to love; and so here I am, a CHRISTIAN."

Prosonno was deeply impressed with the earnestness of his friend, whose manly spirit greatly stirred his own. But before the conversation could be carried further, Nobo asked his brother whether he remembered that this evening had been appointed for a visit from his father-in-law.

"No," said Prosonno, "I have not forgotten it; but it surely is not late yet. What is the hour, Rám Doyal?"

Rám Doyal said it wanted but five minutes to nine o'clock. Hearing this, both the visitors at once rose to take a hasty though kind leave of their entertainer. Before they went, however, Prosonno took Rám Doyal a little aside, and said, "I wish, Rám Doyal, you would lend me a Bible; I should like to examine it carefully at home."

"Is it possible that, in these days of enlightenment, you have never read that blessed book?" exclaimed his friend.

"No," said Prosonno, "I am ashamed to say I have not read it; at least, not as it ought to be read, though I once did take a peep into the Old Testament history, and was very much interested by it."

"Will you have an English or Bengalee copy?" asked Rám Doyal.

"On the whole, I think I should prefer the Bengalee," replied Prosonno; "ideas sound so much sweeter in one's own language than in a foreign tongue."

"I quite agree with you," said Rám Doyal, as he handed to Prosonno a Bengalee Bible. "May God grant you wisdom and grace to read it aright."

As the two brothers walked home, their minds were exercised in a very different manner. Prosonno's was filled with conflicting emotions. "Could Brahmism be untrue?—had it really no fixed base to rest on?—was it so uncertain in its teaching?—and were its followers actually the upholders of the gross idolatry around them? Was it a system that could not satisfy the mind respecting that all-important doctrine, the forgiveness of sins? The Christian atonement, again! how strange its teaching, that God had laid upon another, an innocent being, the suffering that sinners deserved! Was it not too wonderful to be true? The Son of God to die for perishing sin-

ners! That indeed would be a love which passes comprehension."

Such were the musings which occupied Prosonno by the way; and as he thought of these things, he remained silent; for he knew his brother could not have entered into his feelings. Nobo, on the contrary, was full of life and spirits, had evidently quite forgotten the conversation, and was amusing himself with their friend's new style of dress.

When the young men reached home, they found their evening meal waiting for them, and their father, mother, and grandmother engaged in deep consultation,—a thing rather unusual in a Hindoo family. Mohendro was the first to break the silence. "Do you know, Prosonno," he said, "that your father-in-law has been here this evening, and that we have completed the arrangements for your re-marriage? It must take place at the expiration of four days." By this *re-marriage* is meant the ceremony that consigns the wife to her husband's keeping. A girl generally has been a bride for six or seven years when this takes place, during which time she has resided in the house of her father, having been hitherto but

a child. Should it so happen that her husband die before her re-marriage is completed, she is still considered a widow, in the fullest sense of the word, undergoes every privation enjoined on the state of widowhood by the Shastres, and can never marry again.

"But why have you been so long absent to-night?" continued Mohendro; "do you know that I am seriously displeased with you? I thought you knew your duty to your father-in-law better than to neglect him in this manner. Pray, where have you been, Prosonno?"

"I wanted a book from a friend of mine, and have been to his house to fetch it," replied Prosonno.

"A sufficiently evasive answer, in all conscience," retorted the father. "Now, will you be so good as to tell me who this friend of yours is, and what is the name of the book, and why you were three hours fetching it from, I dare say, (if the truth were known,) the next street."

Poor Prosonno trembled from head to foot. He could not bear the idea of resigning his Bible, and he did not like to tell a falsehood; he, therefore, hesitated, trying to concoct an answer which

might be strictly true, and yet not betray his secret. This agitation was observed by the father, and, of course, made matters ten times worse. Fortunately, however, as Prosonno thought, his brother came to his aid, saying, "O father, the young man we went to see lives very far from here, so that a great part of the time of our absence was occupied in the walk to and from his house."

"But who is he?" persisted Mohendro.

"Oh!" replied Nobo, "he has been brought up a Brahmist, but has lately begun to read the book of the Christians, and seems to like it. Prosonno and myself were showing him the absurd errors contained in the system it teaches, and so the time slipped away without our being aware of it."

"Well," said Mohendro, appeased by this timely interference of his favorite son, "well, you were better employed than I had feared."

Notwithstanding this, Prosonno was uncomfortable and unhappy; he felt that Nobo had concealed the great truth, that they had been in the company of a Christian. Somehow he wished his father to know that, and was just going to tell him so, when his brother signed to him to remain

quiet. He did so; but this partial deception availed them nothing. Mohendro had not forgotten about the book, having a shrewd suspicion of what it really was; so, after several vain attempts at concealment, the young men were at last compelled to bring forth their hidden treasure. Their father, enraged beyond measure, first dashed the book on the ground, and then ordered it into the fire. It was soon consumed to ashes.

Poor Prosonno!—his highly prized volume destroyed! The pleasure he had anticipated that very night, in the secret perusal of its pages, vanished like a dream!—his anxiety to acquaint himself with its truths and its philosophy disappointed entirely!—and, above all, his hopes of learning more of a Saviour's love blighted in their first buddings! Altogether, it was more than he could bear, and he burst into tears. This only tended to make Mohendro more angry. He began to fear that the Christian's book had taken a greater hold on his son's affections than he had thought, and he reproached both the young men with every bitter epithet that occurred to his mind, until they were glad to leave their meal untasted and retire to rest.

Prosonno observed that, whilst every member of his family had expressed the greatest horror at his having brought a Bible into their dwelling, his grandmother alone, from whom he might have expected the strongest opposition, made no remark on the heinousness of his crime, but merely sat looking very sad at his disappointment. As he went out of the room, the aged woman beckoned him aside, and said, with tears in her eyes, "Your father has been very cruel to you, Prosonno; but think no more of your loss, to-morrow I will make amends for it." Prosonno thanked his grandmother, to whom he was sincerely attached; but, as he went up the stairs, he thought to himself, "Poor dear, I suppose she will give me some nice sweetmeats, or cook me a curry with her own hands to-morrow; she little thinks that nothing she can do can compensate for my loss."

Prosonno did not, indeed, understand all the evidences of Christianity; but he was beginning to feel that he must possess such a religion, or die everlastingly; and this it was that made him prize so highly a volume that was useless, or worse than useless, in the estimation of the other

memoers of his family. He had, however, judged wrongly of his grandmother, for on coming out of his room the next morning, she met him with a book carefully concealed in the folds of her dress. She slipped it into his hand, whispering, "Be sure you keep my secret," and then suddenly disappeared. Prosonno returned to his room, astonished; wondering what this book would prove to be, he bolted the door, and began to examine its pages. To his inconceivable delight, he found it was a Bengalee New Testament,—not in the white paper, the neat type, and elegant language of his lost treasure, it was true, but still containing the same blessed truth,—the love of Christ to perishing sinners. It was the New Testament bestowed on Prosonno's father at Saugor Island, more than forty years before. It was the Testament accompanied by the prayers of a man who was now before the throne of God, for "he had labored and had not fainted." What a striking verification of the inspired promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it aftei many days!"

Prosonno read and pondered, but there were many things that he could not understand. Be-

sides, during the three following days, such unusual excitement prevailed in the family, as prevented him almost entirely from studying the subject, so that he made little or no progress in religious truth. The whole household, and more particularly the women, were busied in making preparations for the reception of his bride, and great joy was expressed on every hand. Prosonno's mother and grandmother were delighted with the prospect of receiving this new member of their family; why, we can scarcely tell; but it is an acknowledged fact, that Hindoo parents have no greater pleasure than to see their children settled in life. The other two daughters-in-law, Shoudaminee and Nistarinee, who were already inhabitants of their husbands' or rather their father-in-law's house, were delighted because they were to have another companion to assist them to wile away the unemployed hours of the long tedious mornings. Nobo was delighted, because he had heard that the expected sister-in-law was able to read and write, two most unusual accomplishments among the ladies of their acquaintance: and the usages of Hindooism permitting him, as Prosonno's younger brother, to hold free inter-

course with his wife, he looked forward with much pleasure to conversing with and instructing her. Surjo Kumár and Chondro Kumár, on the contrary, being Prosonno's elder brothers, were strictly prohibited from ever speaking to or even looking on the face of his bride. Nevertheless, they gladly took part in the family rejoicings. Their father was delighted because his daughter-in-law was a strict Hindoo, and report said she passed much of her time in reading the Ramayan and Mohabharat; this, he thought, might exert a beneficial influence on his son.

Prosonno was perhaps the only member of the family who was wholly unconcerned. His bride had been entirely his parent's choice, and though, after the marriage ceremony had been performed, he had occasionally seen and admired her, yet they were both perfect strangers to each other's thoughts and feelings; nor did Prosonno expect to find in her that sympathy of heart and mind which in other countries forms the bond of union between husband and wife. His wife he knew to be entirely uneducated, a being shut up within the walls of her father's Zenana*, totally

* *Zenana*, the apartments of the women.

unacquainted with everything beyond her own narrow sphere, unlearned in the principles of geography and history! What could a spirit like hers have in common with his own? Poor Prosonno! At first these reflections made him very sad, but he banished them from his mind, and with some half hopeless resolves to try and educate his wife, and to make her a fitter companion for himself, he settled down into a state of utter indifference to the approaching ceremony.

At length the important day arrived, and Prosonno repaired to the house of his father-in-law. The women's apartments were evidently filled with visitors, for he could distinctly hear their shouts and merry-makings; but no men had been invited to the ceremony. Soon after his arrival, Prosonno was placed in a room by himself, where he was joined by his bride, KAMINEE, a lovely girl of fourteen. She was tall and graceful, possessing a regular profile, with large, deep black eyes, high forehead, and long silken eyelashes. Her beautiful hair, which in its natural state flowed down almost to her feet, was now neatly braided with sweet scented oil, and ornamented with vermillion. Her expression was soft and

sweet, and her voice gentleness itself. She was literally covered with jewels. On the same wrist she wore three varieties of bracelets; round her neck was a chain of gold and a necklace of pearls; her hair, too, was decorated with a head-dress of gold and precious stones; the nose and ears had ornaments of gold, the latter in the shape of a passion flower, each stamen terminating in a bright gem. A little above the elbow were two curiously wrought armlets of gold; and on the feet simple ornaments of silver. The Hindoos have a superstition that if they degrade gold so far as to wear it on their feet, they will live to be in need of that precious commodity.

When Kaminee entered the room, she looked pale and tired, and cast a timid glance at her future lord. No wonder, poor young creature; she had been the day before initiated into one of the most disgusting practices of heathenism, a practice which the heathen themselves blush to speak of, but which is nevertheless carried out at the present day in every Hindoo household, both rich and poor, high and low, on the day previous to the re-marriage of any of its female members.

A detail of that ceremony may not be written;

suffice it to say that Kaminee's female relatives, together with some of their neighbors, had assembled themselves within a private court-yard; they had there dug a hole in the ground, placed her in the middle, and each one had besprinkled her and themselves with a mixture of mud and saffron, at the same time giving vent to every variety of coarse, vulgar jest, and improper expression; singing the most degrading songs, and dancing round the bride like insane persons, assisted by women whose very presence ought to have been considered contamination! But we need go no further. Could there be a more striking proof that the cruel seclusion in which the women of India are compelled to pass their lives, has not contributed to the preservation of that purity of heart and mind which is the only safeguard against sin?

But to return. When all parties were ready, Prosonno and his wife were informed that the priest who was for a second time to unite them was standing outside the door. He then repeated the following sacred text, presenting at the same time an offering of alloa-rice, flowers, Ganges water, and sandal-wood, "O thou glorious Sun,

God himself, Light of the world, Power of Vishnoo, Lord of the universe, pure spirit, bestower of the ability to labor, thou of the thousand rays, receive our offerings, and be gracious unto us."

This text Prosonno repeated after him, standing on the inner side of the closed door. He then proceeded with several other texts, the bride and bridegroom, meanwhile, following his directions,—such as joining hands, touching each other's heads, and the like. The ceremony was concluded by a prayer, which will not bear insertion. Could we at that moment have looked into the secret recesses of Prosonno's heart, we should have seen that his growing dislike to Hindooism had settled, owing to the events of that day, into a deep aversion. He felt that a system whose very religion was connected with so much that was impure, could not have emanated from the fountain of holiness, and purity, and truth.

After the marriage ceremony had been performed, great rejoicing took place, and a splendid entertainment, which was prepared by his father-in-law, was served to the female visitors. The bride and bridegroom then took their leave.

The former was conveyed in a covered palanquin, in which she was quietly placed before the bearers were called to lift it; so that neither they nor any other person might look upon her beauty. She was now going, according to the usages of Hindooism, to be subjected to even closer confinement than had been her lot under the parental roof.



CHAPTER III.

THE house to which our bride had been introduced was built in the fashion of most Hindoo houses. The reader must imagine himself in a fine open court-yard of fifty feet square. He enters from the south, and opposite him is the DALAN or sanctuary for public festivals, such as for the Durga Pooja, the Kali, or the Kartick Pooja. This Dalan is considerably raised from the ground and is reached from the court-yard by a flight of steps. It contains various images, which are covered with dust, and seem quite neglected. On festival days, however, they are cleaned and decorated with all kinds of tinsel-ornaments. All around the open court is a narrow covered verandah, called *chók melon,* and beyond this is a double row of small rooms. These contain the parlors and drawing-rooms, and also the sleeping apartments for the single men of the family. The whole of this part of the house is called

sodor ghor, or principal house, and is all that ever meets the eye of a stranger. Beyond the Dalan, to the north of it, there is another court, similar to the one described, containing also verandahs and barrack-like apartments. This is called the Antohpur, or house of the women, and communicates by a private passage with the court of the principal house, that females who cannot appear in that court may still come unobserved for religious purposes to the Dalan. They are by no means allowed to frequent it, even at the time of great poojas, their own Zenana containing the *Thakoor ghor*, or room for household gods. This is a constant sanctuary, and is visited daily, but at different hours, by the male and female members of a family, or, at least, by such of them as are in the habit of performing daily worship. The remaining rooms contain the kitchens, dormitories, and dining-rooms. The women may meet in these private halls and verandahs, but are never expected to tread the outer court, or the rooms adjoining it.

Such was the dwelling which acknowledged Mohendro as its proprietor. There were two stories to it,—the second story exactly like the

ground floor, excepting that the Dalan was undivided, its roof constituting the highest roof of the building, and thus imparting an air of grandeur not possessed by the other parts. If it contained many rooms, there were also many inhabitants to occupy them; for every Hindoo of property is bound to afford lodging to, and often to support, a numerous class of relatives. The widows of a family, however distant their relationship, generally claim the support of that member of the family whom they think most capable of affording them aid.

Mohendro was not one to set aside these ancient usages. Accordingly, he was generously supporting his mother's sister, and a younger sister of his father's; a widow of a cousin, and the widowed daughter-in-law of his sister; an aunt of his wife's, and the widow of his brother; in addition to his own mother, to whom he paid all the filial duty which her relationship claimed. Mohendro's brother, as a matter of course, with his family, was an inhabitant of the parent-house. Our readers may remember the little infant snatched from an untimely grave. Nearly fifty summers had since then passed over his brow, and

he was still living in the full pride of manhood, with two sons growing up beside him. His wife had died in giving birth to the youngest, and he had not filled her place with another. An orphan cousin was another inmate of the house. Mohendro treated him with the greatest kindness; and at the time of which we write, he was making preparations for his wedding, which was to cost an immense sum of money. His own four sons came next; three of these had wives. Surjo Kumár had two children, and Chondro had one; and, finally, there was Mohendro's little girl, Hemlota, his wife, and himself, making in all twenty-four persons. Servants there were besides.

It might have been about three months after Prosonno's marriage, that Shoudaminee, Surjo Kumár's wife, was one day sitting listlessly in the verandah, with her baby, named Gopal, sleeping on the floor beside her, when Kaminee came out of her room, with her Ramayan in her hand, and taking her seat on the floor, with the verandah rails for a back, she began to read aloud, or rather chant, the words of the epic poem, in that peculiarly slow, monotonous tone, used by Hindoos for

all poetry. She had no sooner sat down, than Shoudaminee exclaimed: "O Kaminee, I am reminded by that book that Gopal's father* desired me to ask you to teach me to perform the worship of Siva. I see you perform it every morning, and he wishes me to do the same."

"You had better learn to read the texts for yourself, sister; shall I teach you? You will then be able to perform all the kinds of worship enjoined in the Shastres."

"Oh, dear, no, Kaminee," replied Shoudaminee, "Gopal's father would be very angry if I learnt to read. How could I attend to the children; besides, no one in our family ever learnt, and I am not going to be the first to begin. I should certainly expect some dreadful calamity to befall me, if I went contrary to all the usages of my forefathers.

Kaminee was quite tired of combating this argument, which, in one way or another, she heard every day of her life; so she merely smiled and said, "Well, sister, I suppose I must teach you the texts in the same way that you heard me

* Her son's father, her husband, whose name she will not speak.

teach my parrot this morning. When shall we begin?"

"Now, if you like," replied Shoudaminee; "I think baby will sleep a long time, and we shall not be disturbed. But stay; let me call Nistarinee: she ought to learn the Siva Pooja worship too."

Chondro's wife was, however, greatly offended with poor Kaminee and declined to come. Mohendro had brought the latter home a beautiful dress in the morning, because she had been getting rather melancholy of late, and spoke of wishing to see her own mother once more; and he thought this little attention might please and divert her. But Nistarinee called all her melancholy mere affectation, and because she had not received a dress similar to Kaminee's, she had insinuated that Kaminee was a designing, artful woman, and had also vented her wrath on her father-in-law, as far as she dared, by the sarcastic application of the Bengalee proverb: "In this house, seemingly, it is the child that cries that gets the rice." The quarrel had become high; and it was only by the authoritative interference of Prosonno's grandmother, that the disputants were pacified.

This partial reconciliation had taken place only a couple of hours before. Shoudaminee now called on her sister to become Kaminee's pupil: and, as the reader may naturally suppose, it did not tend to strengthen their forced union.

"I think you have all taken leave of your senses," exclaimed Nistarinee; "you too, sister; what do you mean by sitting at the feet of that girl, who came among us only the other day, and has already prejudiced us so much in the opinion of our husbands' father, that we must be put off with fair words while she gets all the presents? Learn the Siva Pooja of her forsooth! I tell you, sister, we are much better without either her or her instructions. What with her poojas and her reading, she is so conceited that there is no bearing with her. But she will learn wisdom in time! Wait till she begins to take her share in the cooking: she will find that a text does not make the best spice for a curry; or, at least, her husband will find it out, if she does not, and then she won't like what will follow! When her children come it will be still worse. I suppose she will be reading a chapter in the Ramayan to

the baby, when it cries for milk, or repeating the name of Siva by way of a lullaby."

"For shame, Nistarinee," said Shoudaminee; "see, you have made poor Kaminee weep, how can you do so? Besides, what you say is disrespectful to the gods. You had better go away and hold your peace until you have forgotten this unfortunate cause of quarrel."

Nistarinee walked into her own room, muttering that if her elder sister, who had always been her friend, was now going to turn against her, she would not stand it; no, she would run away, commit suicide, take poison.

But Shoudaminee knew her better than to believe all this, nor was she going to turn against her. Of a most amiable and imperturbable nature herself, she always made every allowance for Nistarinee's impetuous temper, and on this occasion, as on every other, endeavored to restore happiness and peace.

"Come, Kaminee," she said, wiping away her tears, "you must not mind Nistarinee's hard speeches; she will be sorry to-morrow; come, begin your instructions, I am all attention: for I

really wish to please Gopal's father by learning to perform that pooja."

Kaminee was much comforted by her sister's kindness, and readily complied with her request. "Listen, then, sister," she said.

"In the Siva Pooja, the first thing to be done is this, you take some of the Ganges mud into your hand and say this text: *This earth I take possession of.* Then form the figure of Siva, and placing it upon the upper side of a leaf from the Bél tree, (which tree is his peculiar delight,) repeat this—*Holder of the Sacred Trident, come into this image, and abide in it while I worship.* It then becomes Siva himself. But he will not accept your offerings until you have paid adoration to four other classes of deities; and for this purpose you must learn first the montro which begins with *Ganesh.* It consists of five sacred names,—viz., *Ganesh, Surjo, Durgá, Vishnoo,* and all the goddesses in one. As you repeat each name, a flower must be placed on the image of Siva before you. The nine planets next claim your homage; and as you call on them successively, you offer, as before, a flower on Siva's shrine. The worship of the lords of the eight minor points of the com-

pass comes next in order. In concluding this part of the service, you worship *Ononto*, the lord of the lower regions, and *Sri Krishnoo*, the lord of the upper regions, by calling out their names and offering flowers.

"The Siva Poojah itself may now be commenced; it is done in the following manner:—You offer a flower on the image, and then, placing it on your own head, you must meditate on these words, which are enjoined by the Shastres, and are called the *Dhyán*, or Contemplation of Siva.

"*He is the being with three eyes, fair as mountains of silver; the beauteous moon is the ornament of his forehead, and his face is as brilliant gems. A being with four hands, he dispenses favors with one; drives away fear from the heart of man with another; therefore he is called Obhoy (the Fearless.) In the third hand he holds an axe, and the fourth rests upon a beautiful deer. Excellent in nature, he is the giver of blessings to his worshippers. He sits upon the water-lily, and all the gods from the four corners of heaven fall down to pay him due homage. Tiger skins form his clothing. He is the first existing, the beginning and former of our being,*

having five faces and three eyes. He is the lord of the world.

"After you have said these words to yourself, slowly and thoughtfully, take the flowers off your head, and placing another on the head of Siva, repeat the same words once more, keeping your heart steadily fixed on the object of your worship.

"This meditation concluded, you have now to entertain our great deity in the same way as we entertain any other distinguished guest. This is done by the performance of seven different acts. The first is *Padhao*. In order to do this aright, you take a little water in your kosa, (the copper vessel, used only for religious purposes), and offer it to the image, as water to wash his feet. The second act is *Orgho*, and corresponds with our setting refreshments before a visitor after we have given him water for his feet. In an offering to Siva, this refreshment must consist of grass, alloa rice, flowers, Ganges water, and sandal-wood. The third is *Auchmony*. You now offer water to wash the hands in. The fourth act is *Gondo-pushpo*, or perfuming. In this case the usual offering is again sandal-wood. The fifth is *Dhoop*, when you burn incense before the image. The

sixth act is *Dip*, or presenting him with a lighted lamp; and the seventh and last is the *Noibedyo*, an offering consisting of sweetmeats, alloa rice, fruits, and the like.

"After this you must worship Siva under his eight different forms. This completed, pronounce the name of Siva ten times, and, prostrating yourself on the ground, offer up this prayer:—*Thou art the only self-existing power; thou hast no equal; thou alone art my salvation; receive my worship, and bestow favors upon me.*

"The service is now concluded, with the exception of a ceremony which gives great delight to Siva. This consists in making all sorts of noises, such as clapping the hands, slapping the cheeks, knocking both feet together, and at the same time accompanying the noise with *Bom, Bom, Mahadeo; Bom, Bom*, over and over again."

Shoudaminee thought that the worship of Siva was rather difficult, and that it would require many days for her to learn all the texts or montros by heart, especially as they were to be said in Sanskrit, an unknown tongue; but Kaminee cheerfully consented to give her a daily lesson, and so the matter was arranged. At that moment

Prosonno came out of his room, and beckoned to his wife. "See, sister," she said, "I must go now; your brother-in-law is calling me to get him his tiffin,"* and with that she went.

Prosonno had become much more attached to Kaminee than he had expected to be; for she was very sweet-tempered, and, although uneducated, was naturally so intelligent, that a little teaching was sufficient to make her comprehend most of the subjects he wished her to be acquainted with. She, too, loved him much, and looked up to him as a model of perfection. There was one thing, however, that pained Prosonno; his wife was wholly given to idolatry. Possessed of a remarkably clear judgment, and sound common sense in all the ordinary affairs of life, in the matter of religion she appeared to him perfectly astray. The most horrid dogma, provided it was to be found in the Shastres, never caused her a shudder. The intensely childish ceremony obtained from her no look of contempt. The utter absurdity of many a history professing to be inspired, provoked no smile of unbelief, and the grossest impurity passed with her for sound religious truth.

* Tiffin-lunch.

Prosonno did not know what to think; for he scarcely understood, at that time that Kaminee's mind was but enveloped in the mist of darkness and ignorance in which Satan loves to keep his votaries; whilst his own had been gradually enlightened by the Spirit of all truth! Prosonno was almost a Christian! His marriage had been the means of procuring him more liberty than before, and he gladly availed himself of it to pay frequent visits to his Christian friend Rám Doyal. One by one his objections to Christianity had been removed, while he had become daily more wearied of the cold and formal worship of the Brahma Sabha, its monotonous inculcation of moral principles, and its constant panegyrics of the works of nature.

Prosonno had an unprejudiced mind. He was earnestly and sincerely seeking after the truth; therefore arguments such as those presented by his friend, Rám Doyal, did not fail to produce conviction. Yet it was not that he was merely intellectually convinced; it was that Christ himself was drawing him with cords of love; it was that Prosonno knew the burden of his own sins and felt the need of a Saviour.

One of the great fruits of our holy religion is, that it makes us deeply solicitous for the spiritual welfare of others, and this was already displayed in the conduct of our young disciple. He was most anxious to win over his wife to the faith of Jesus. To have broached the subject directly would have been only to provoke the most violent opposition, and probably to have deprived himself of the pleasure and profit of visiting his Christian friend, Rám Doyal; he used, therefore, in speaking to Kaminee, all sorts of indirect means to inculcate the principles of Christianity; but perhaps he had never gone so far as on the present occasion.

The reader will remember we left Kaminee obeying her husband's call. As she entered the room he hastily closed the New Testament given him by his grandmother, which had been to him of the greatest assistance in his spiritual life. The fifth chapter of Romans was the part he had been studying, and with his heart full of the subject he said to his wife; "Come, Kaminee, sit down, and let us have tiffin together for once; no one will see us, and I am sure you are wiser than to think any harm will come of it. I wish

to talk with you about a book I have been reading."

Kaminee was always pleased and flattered by her husband treating her as a companion, and took her seat with a smiling face.

"Do you know, Kaminee, if there are any religions in the world besides our own?"

"Yes," replied his wife; "there is Mohammedanism."

"So there is," said Prosonno; "but there is yet another; and it is that religion of which I have been reading. It teaches us that all men are sinners, Kaminee."

"Well," returned his wife, "I think that may be true; for indeed how seldom we see a man or a woman who never commits sin. It is well for us that the gods have appointed different works of merit which are not very difficult, and through the performance of which we may get free of sin and ascend into the heaven of Indra."

"But," said Prosonno, "my book teaches that there are no such things as works of merit."

"What a strange doctrine," said Kaminee: "no works of merit! Is giving your own property to the poor not a work of merit? Or is feeding

Brahmins not a work of merit? Or is digging a tank no merit? Or is mortifying your flesh not a work of merit?"

"No," said Prosonno: "at least the book says, that as we owe to God the performance of every good action, we only pay our just debts, we only do our duty, when we perform them; and there is no merit in the question at all."

"Well," replied his wife, "that doctrine cannot be very beneficial, for who would perform good actions when there is no merit to be obtained by them? Besides, how do these strange religionists ever expect to get to heaven?"

"Through the merits of another," said Prosonno.

"Well, I declare," said Kaminee, "I never heard of anything so easy; but amid their calculations they must have forgotten that if all men are sinners then no one man could save the rest."

"No, dear," continued Prosonno, "that has not been forgotten; for this Saviour is an incarnation of the great God himself, a sinless Being, and therefore he can save the sinner."

"By that you mean," said Kaminee, "that He

forgives them; well, if that is all, there is nothing strange in it; do we not expect the same from our deities? But why did God become incarnate? He has nothing to do but speak the word, and immediately the sinner ascends into His glorious heaven. Or, had he, like Vishnoo, special works to accomplish?"

"You are altogether mistaken, Kaminee," said Prosonno; but then, correcting himself, he added, "at least, according to this book, which teaches that its followers expect to be saved through the merits of the incarnate God."

"Well, but how can they do good to man?" asked Kaminee.

"It is of His own free will," answered her husband, "accomplished in this way. God took upon Himself human nature, in order that He might be able to suffer the punishment of sin, which is death; He underwent this punishment, and offered Himself as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of man; and His life being so much more precious than the life of poor worthless men, the single sacrifice of Himself was a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world."

"That I can quite understand," said Kaminee,

"if it were only true; but it cannot be true How unlike it sounds to all we read of our own gods,—the King to die for his subjects! Who ever heard of such condescension? Am I to understand that we are all to be saved through the merits of this incarnate God?"

"The only conditions required, Kaminee," replied Prosonno, "are that we acknowledge our need of His help; that we trust entirely to Him, and that we love Him with all our hearts."

"And commit as many bad actions as we like?" asked his wife.

"God is a pure, holy Being," said Prosonno; "what kind of actions, do you think, would please Him?"

"Pure and holy actions," replied Kaminee.

"Exactly so," said her husband; "and the followers of this book endeavor to lead holy lives in order to please the Being who has done so much for them."

"But," returned Kaminee, "tell me more about the incarnate Being who did all this."

"He became incarnate many, many years ago," said Prosonno, "in a country called Judea. Not,

like Hari* in the form of a boar, a tortoise, or a dwarf, but as a man. He lived among men as a teacher, and went about the country with twelve disciples. Wherever he wandered he taught the people about religion, and healed their sick in a most wonderful manner. By a single word He drove off their diseases; He even gave blind men their sight, cured lepers whom no doctors can heal, and sometimes actually raised the dead to life. All this He did, not for sport or uselessly, but always for the benefit of those who suffered. But, at last, the wicked priests of the country, who did not like His teaching, accused Him falsely, and got Him crucified.'

"What a strange story!" said Kaminee; "and what happened then?"

"If He had been only a scholar, or a good man," said Prosonno, "nothing more would have happened; but He was more than man; His actions proved it. So His body was buried in a tomb hewed out of a rock, not burnt, like the bodies of Hindoos, and after remaining in this grave for three days, He rose again, and ascended into heaven."

* A Hindoo God, Vishnoo.

"Did any one see Him after He became alive again?" asked Kaminee.

"Yes," said Prosonno, "He was seen by many of those who had loved and served Him before He suffered death."

"Ah, then," exclaimed his wife, "perhaps the whole story was just made up by them as a pretty tale. Come, come, I will hear no more, and you must not look into that book again; it will only unsettle your mind. Let me read you that chapter in the Mohabharat which, you say, always makes you laugh. It will amuse you, and put out of your mind these new doctrines."

"No, dear," said Prosonno, "I must go out now, having made an arrangement with a friend to meet him at three o clock."

"Very well," replied his wife, "I am sorry you must go; but just tell me the name of the religion you have been talking about."

"Never mind the name, dear," said Prosonno; "but I wish you would ponder its doctrines, and see whether you do not think them right ones."

He almost feared he had said too much, and thinking that Kaminee might detain him for an explanation of his strange words, he hurried away;

for he would not have lost that visit to Rám Doyal for a great deal. But the whole conversation had made little impression on the mind of Kaminee. Her heart was like the hard and stony wayside from which Satan catches away the seeds of gospel truth before they have had time to sink in and become fruitful.

Hearing a noise on the other side of the house, away went Kaminee to see what it could mean. She found it proceeded from Nistarinee's room, and went towards it; but as soon as she perceived that Chondro Kumar was there, she veiled her face, and made a hasty retreat into the adjoining room, where she might hear what was going on without being seen by her husband's brother. Chondro was beating his wife severely, not because he thought her in fault, (for in all countries husbands take the part of their wives when the quarrel has been with a third party), but because she had been the occasion of his mother's finding fault with him. His mother was a quarrelsome, disagreeable woman, selfish in the extreme; and as soon as Chondro had come in from business, hot and weary, she told him, in the most irritating manner, how his wife had insulted Kaminee.

and insinuated that if he visited her with no punishment, she would consider him a weak-minded man, entirely under his wife's government. It was not that she cared for one daughter-in-law more than the other; but it was pure self-interest that dictated this speech. Nistarinee was an orphan; whereas Kaminee had an influential father, who, the old woman thought, might perhaps have removed her entirely from under their roof had he heard that she was not comfortable. But his mother's taunt was more than Chondro could well bear, and without inquiring, he took off his shoe and began to beat Nistarinee most unmercifully, saying, at the same time, more for his mother's than his wife's benefit, "This will teach you to quarrel with a favorite again. Did you not know that your brother-in-law's wife was too good, and too clever, and too holy, to allow of your being a fit companion for her? Do you not know that you are not worthy to tread the same ground as she? You will be pleased in future to keep to yourself, and not to offend the righteous Kaminee with your impertinence."

Scenes such as these are of frequent occurrence in the bosom of many a Hindoo family. They

arise from various causes. The chief cause must ever be the want of Christianity, that elevator of the affections, that softener of the heart, that religion so eminently the friend of woman. But inferior causes are also at work. Females are kept in such a state of ignorance and degradation that everything that is high and noble in their nature is crushed, almost destroyed; and therefore it is natural that in the every-day dealings of the family they should display petty jealousies or have recourse to mean methods of obtaining favor. Their total want of education deprives them of the pleasure of reading and writing, not to speak of the more elegant accomplishments with which the ladies of Christian lands may amuse themselves: therefore time hangs heavy on their hands, and they have the leisure afforded them for carrying on at will the most perfect system of domestic warfare. The plan of having several branches of the same family to reside together in one house, is also pregnant with causes of discord. But it is a custom handed down by their forefathers to the Hindoos, and that alone is, in their minds, sufficient reason for continuing it and transmitting it to their posterity.

From her place of concealment Kaminee heard all that passed, and really sorry was she to have been the occasion of poor Nistarinee's punishment, particularly since her eldest sister was by no means of a vindictive temper. Accordingly Kaminee, as soon as she heard Chondro go down stairs, did what very few Bengalee women would have done; she went to Nistarinee, expressed her sorrow for what had passed, and begged that they might be friends again. Gradually the clouds passed from the brow of Nistarinee, and she smilingly said: "Well, I think it very foolish to have been so angry all about a dress!"

It might have seemed strange to some to have looked on those two sisters an hour after, and to have seen them busily engaged at a favorite Bengalee game, that of Mogul-Pathan. To an English mind, the question would at once have occurred, "How could Nistarinee so soon have forgotten her husband's ill-treatment." But such a one, if she lived among Hindoo ladies, would find that scenes like the foregoing happened too frequently, and were too common to cause much sensation, or to give rise to those bitter feelings that might otherwise be expected.

The game which seemed to give so much delight to Nistarinee and Kaminee was one of the many ingenious ones in the playing of which the secluded females of India love to pass their leisure hours. Mogul-Pathan is a representation of a battle between the Moguls and the Pathans or Affghans. The battle-field is accurately drawn, consisting of sixteen squares; within this figure is inscribed a large square. On one side is ranged the Mogul army in a triangular form, and on the opposite side the Pathan army. Each army consists of sixteen pieces, the moves of which are regulated not by chance, but by the skill of the players.

When the game was finished, Kaminee went into her own room, got her husband's dinner ready, and sat waiting for him, but he did not come, till at last, weary of watching, she retired to rest. But Prosonno did not remain out all night. He came in about eleven o'clock, when his wife immediately got up to light his lamp. She thought he looked anxious and flurried; and every attention on her part seemed to give him pain; till at last he said, "Oh! do not give yourself any trouble about me, Kaminee; go to rest,

and leave me the lamp. I am going to read for the next two hours." This was his usual practice, so Kaminee thought no more about it, and retired. But she afterwards declared, (whether it was a lovely dream, or her last waking thought, she could not tell), that she saw her husband bend over her that night with looks of the saddest, the intensest love, and heard him say, "God bless you, my precious wife."



CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning on awaking, Kaminee found that Prosonno had already left the room. This circumstance, combined with his strange manner on the preceding night, tended to make her very anxious; she, therefore, went in search of his grandmother, in order to impart to her her own fears regarding her favorite, knowing there was no one who was more interested in Prosonno, or who loved him better. The good woman made every possible search; but he certainly was not in the house, and no one had seen him go out; though to be sure, it was quite probable that he was taking an early walk, and had risen before any other members of the family. But the day advanced, and Prosonno did not return. The whole family were now alarmed, and various were the fears suggested to the mind of each one. Mohendro's father's sister, a very decrepit old woman, hinted that Prosonno might have been

spirited away, and though this opinion was not generally adopted, yet in the state of their minds at that time, it was sufficient to cause a shudder to come over them.

Surjo Kumar feared he had been drowned in bathing; but he was too considerate to mention this thought in the presence of his mother, and only spoke of it to Chondro, who did not, however, agree with him. He thought it was more likely that Prosonno had broken a blood-vessel while out walking, as he had done on a former occasion not long ago, and that probably he was lying ill somewhere without the means, perhaps without the strength, to send intelligence to his family. In Kaminee's mind every feeling of fear had been awakened. She had an undefined dread of some fearful impending calamity, and falling at the feet of her mother-in-law, she entreated her to send messengers in every direction in search of her missing husband.

"Oh, how willingly would I go and seek him myself?" she exclaimed, "if these bonds of custom did not prevent me. Alas! how irksome they seem now, though I never felt them so before. My honored lord, what should I do if

you never returned. Why did you not take me with you, giver of my life? In your company, I should have wanted no better dwelling than the shade of a tree, and no better food than the wild berries which the bats eat; but without you this beautiful house will be to me more lonely than the barren desert." Striking her head on the cold stone, she continued—"As the chatokee bird looks for the dew of heaven, and will be satisfied with the water of no earthly spring, so my soul looks to you. You must come back to me, for no inferior joy can yield me any delight. Oh, return, lord of my life, jewel of my existence; return, or I must die!"

This frantic grief was not all really felt, though, in her case, regret was far more sincere than in hundreds of others; but the words were such as Kaminee was expected to utter on the loss of her husband, and accordingly she did so. Moved by her distress, and, indeed, most anxious themselves, Prosonno's three brothers set off in search of him. They looked far and near, every school and college was examined, all his favorite haunts were explored, but he was nowhere to be found.

At last Nobo Kumár thought of Rám Doyal's

house. They went thither; Prosonno was not there, but Rám Doyal could give them some information about their brother,—he was in the house of a Christian missionary, and was determined to become a Christian himself.

No whirlwind ever swept the earth with more unexpected fury; no thunderbolt ever fell with more astounding vehemence than did this intelligence on the hearts of Prosonno's brothers. They hastened home to communicate it; but how shall we describe the storm that followed? Mohendro and his wife were, perhaps, the most bitter. "Spirited away, drowned, dying, anything would have been better than this! The honor of our family gone! Our son sold to the stranger! our daughter-in-law made a widow! our caste in danger! the gods dishonored! Oh! what could have drawn down this curse upon our heads?" Kaminee, too, all her feelings for her husband changed, for the moment, into deadliest hate, abused him as a vile apostate, a heartless wretch, a renegade from the faith of his fathers.

But the family were not going to sit still and do nothing. Prosonno must be reclaimed ere the fatal waters of Christian baptism should be poured

over his head! For the rest, atonement might be made; the caste he had abjured, in taking the food of an Englishman, might be restored by a feast to the Brahmins. The sin, that it was in his heart to become a Christian, might also be forgiven by large gifts to the same powerful order of priests: but baptized he must not be. He must be brought home, whether by foul means or fair, by force or persuasion, by false promises or threatenings; and if no other means would avail to keep him at home, they would administer to him a noxious drug, which would forever destroy his reason. What of that? Anything was better than being a Christian; and a son deprived of his reason was, at least, as good as a daughter. Such were the devices with which Satan filled the hearts of Prosonno's relatives; but God, according to His gracious promise, permitted no weapon that was formed against him to prosper.

Mohendro and his sons immediately repaired to the residence of the missionary, where Prosonno Kumár was supposed to be, and rushing into the house, they demanded an instant interview with him, at the same time accusing the missionary of having enticed him away by pro-

mises of a fine house, an English wife, and a beautiful carriage, though they knew he had done nothing of the kind.

The good missionary bore all their reproaches with perfect calmness, and remembering how much consideration was due to Mohendro's parental feelings, he at once most courteously led the way to the room where Prosonno was sitting. His head was resting on his hand, and his face wore an expression which plainly told how much he dreaded the approaching trial.

"Prosonno," said his father, thinking it best to try gentle means at the outset, "what has made you leave us in this manner? My boy, you must return with me; your absence has turned our dwelling into a house of mourning; your mother has neither eaten nor drank since you left, nor will she do so till you return. Your mother will die; think of that?"

"Father, I would willingly go back," said Prosonno, "if it did not involve the sacrifice of my religion."

"What religion is that?" said Mohendro; "but I can answer that question for you," he added, becoming very angry. "Your religion consists in

dishonoring your father; in causing your mother to die of grief; in forsaking the wife you promised but the other day to love and to cherish; in preferring strangers to your own brethren; in eating with Domes and Kowras, (the two lowest castes); this is the Christian religion; and in turn for all you forsake, what do you get? The pleasure of tasting beef! O Prosonno, how could you have fallen so low? Besides you will not get all they promise; they are great deceivers; you will get no European wife; the white ladies despise black men!"

"O father," exclaimed Prosonno, "I thought you knew me better than to believe me the despicable wretch you have described. No one has made me the promise you talk of. I want no wife, save my beautiful Kaminee; and as for caring for the food you mention, I probably shall never taste it. It has been too long an object of abhorrence for the feeling against it now to be set aside. But O father, things more important far than these have drawn me to the religion of Christ. I have a soul to be saved, sins to be pardoned, eternal joys to obtain; and Christianity offers me these privileges without money and without price.

In embracing the religion of Christ, far from seeking worldly aggrandizement, I know that I must lose my mother and you, and lose all my share in your property. In the house in which I have hitherto been loved and respected I shall now be regarded in the light of a convicted criminal. The lowest menial in your house will think himself degraded in sitting at meat with me. My wife, perhaps, will forsake me. I must leave our comfortable home and its abundance to earn a precarious subsistence; or, what is worse, until I obtain employment I must be dependent on my Christian friends for the bare necessaries of life; I must—"

"O Prosonno," interrupted his eldest brother, "if you understand so well all the miseries connected with embracing this cursed religion, why will you persist in your purpose? You will soon repent of having forsaken your forefathers' faith. I shudder to think of it. The direst vengeance of our holy gods will fall on your head."

"Holy gods! say rather impious fiends," exclaimed Chondro aside, then continued aloud, "Come, brother Surjo, it is of no use to argue with Prosonno in that way. English education

has done away with those ideas. Our first lesson in geography, which taught us that the world was round, also taught us that our Shastres were false, for they declare the world to be a huge flat mass, seated on the back of a tortoise!"

"I hate your English education from the bottom of my heart," retorted Surjo. "It is snapping the foundations of Hindooism."

"But it is not establishing the truth of Christianity," continued Chondro. "No, brother, Christianity is no more true than Hindooism. I only wanted you to let me argue with Prosonno in my own way. Pray do not suspect me of having any prejudices in favor of that system, which I heartily join with you in terming accursed."

"Well, well, go on, boy," said his father, "I think so far you are right in standing up in favor of English education. I do not see that it has anything in common with Christianity; besides we cannot get on without it in these days. See how well you, who have received an English education, have prospered in the world, compared with your poor brother Surjo, who, skilled as he is in the lore of our Shastres, has never attained a higher office than that of a common *Purohit*,

(domestic chaplain), with its miserable pittance. It cannot be helped, Surjo," he continued, "it would have been an injustice to the boys not to have had them taught English; besides, I again repeat it, the knowledge of English has not been the means of bringing Prosonno to abjure his father's faith; no, no, had he never met that accursed Rám Doyal, or this insidious smooth-tongued missionary, my boy would still have been a reverent Hindoo."

"Avaricious old fool," muttered Surjo, "thus is our holy religion ever sacrificed to the love of gain, and then we deceive ourselves with thinking that it is our misfortune, not our fault, that our sons bring everlasting disgrace on our name by choosing the God of the English." This was said aside, and Chondro, not hearing it, went on to join his father and brother in entreating Prosonno to return home with them.

"Prosonno," he said, "you and I very well know that there is but one God, and that everything in nature tells us that His worship is essentially spiritual. To Him all nations are alike. He is neither pleased with rites and ceremonies, nor displeased with them. In the formulas of

Hindooism, and in the religious services of Christianity, it is the spiritual principle alone, so to speak, which He accepts. In the former case the holy water, the sandal-wood, the rice, go for nothing; in the latter the bended knee, the careless hymn, the quantity of words, are equally inefficacious; the heart's adoration alone ascends to the Deity. That adoration you and I can both offer in our private rooms, each in his own way, without violating the great law of nature, gratitude to those who gave us being. "Come, come, Prosonno," he continued, "you can have nothing to urge against my argument, come home with us."

"My dear brother," replied Prosonno, "I wish I could make you understand but half the pain I feel in being obliged to refuse your request. What you have stated to be religion constitutes the creed of the Deist. But I am not such a one; I am a Christian. I have a direct revelation from God, and in that revelation I find commands such as these: 'Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing:' and again, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me:' and again, 'Repent and be baptized.' With such

words before me what can I say? Must I not hearken to the voice of God rather than to the voice of man?"

"But, O boy," exclaimed Mohendro, falling on Prosonno's neck in an agony of tears, "that cannot be the voice of God which tells you to forsake your father; to kill him with sorrow when he is old and gray-headed; to embitter his last days with anguish?"

"No, no, father," exclaimed Prosonno; "I did not say it was Christianity that commands me to forsake you; but Hindooism will oblige me to do it; oh! if it did not, how happy should I be! Father, father, let me follow the dictates of my own conscience and I will remain with you!"

"And what are they?" exclaimed Mohendro, eagerly.

"First, I must publicly receive Christian baptism," said Prosonno.

Mohendro's countenance fell: all hopes of a compromise between Christianity and Hindooism were destroyed. His son went on—"Secondly, I can never bow my knee to an idol made with hands. Thirdly, permit me to attend the church of the Christians on Sundays for public worship;

and lastly, release me from the bonds of caste; God has made all men of one blood, and who am I that I should place a difference between them? Allow me then to sit at meat with my Christian brethren, and permit them to visit me in your house, where I too must not refuse them the rites of hospitality."

At that moment the missionary entered the room: he thought the conference had lasted long enough, and was unwilling that poor Prosonno should be subjected to an unnecessary trial. As he entered he had heard Prosonno's concluding sentence and disapproved of it.

"My dear boy," he said, "I have no doubt that you mean well, but in your zeal for Christianity, you forget that in his own house your father is master, and if he will kindly allow you to remain with him, I do not think you ought to offend his prejudices by stipulating that your Christian friends should eat in his house."

"O sir!" exclaimed Prosonno, "I shall only be too glad to fall in with the wishes of my father, and return with him, if I am not disobeying the command of God. His word, you know

says, 'Use hospitality one to another without grudging.'"

"Yes, that is true, my dear Prosonno," replied the missionary; "but while you are not your own master, I do not see that it quite lies in your power to fulfil the apostle's injunction. Give up that condition, therefore, and so commend the Christian religion in your life and conversation, that in process of time your father shall consider it an honor to receive a Christian into his house."

"Hear him!" exclaimed Mohendro, "come, come, sir, do not trifle with me. If you still persist in detaining my son, I shall go to law about it, and so recover him. Do you know, sir, that you have wilfully abducted, and are now forcibly keeping possession of a minor, over whom no one has any control except myself?"

"O father, father! how can you say that," exclaimed Prosonno, "I a minor! Why, I was sixteen and reached the age of majority according to Hindoo law, two years ago!"

"Peace, you liar," retorted Mohendro, "have I not your horoscope,* and will not that prove what I state?"

* Horoscope; The position of the stars at the time of birth

"My good friend," said the missionary quietly, "when you first came into my house, you observed that for *eighteen long years* you had fed and supported the boy who was ungrateful to you? Besides, that I have abducted him, or now detain him against his will, you well know to be altogether untrue. On the contrary, I should be very much pleased were he able to live in your house always, provided he might remain a Christian."

"Yes, sir," said Prosonno, "I have been telling my father that if he would but allow me liberty to follow the precepts of my own religion, I would most gladly return home with him, and endeavor in every way to discharge my filial obligations to him and my mother."

"Baboo," said the missionary, turning to Mohendro, "what could be fairer than this? Do, I beseech you, grant your son's request!"

"And defile our house, and taint our unsullied reputation, and incur everlasting disgrace!" exclaimed Surjo angrily. "You know we cannot and will not receive a Christian, and therefore you taunt us?"

is always calculated by the Brahmins and is an evidence of age.

"By no means," replied the missionary; "God only knows the anguish these scenes occasion me Were I to listen to feeling alone, I should say, 'Take your son, and go in peace;' but the Master whom I serve tells me that 'every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for His sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.' With this glorious promise set before him, can I do otherwise than urge Prosonno to persevere in the resolution he has adopted, that he may in the end receive what God has promised, a crown of life? No, no, I did not taunt you, but I had heard that your father was deeply attached to Prosonno, and I had fondly hoped that this would have induced him to be the first Hindoo parent who would nobly come forward and say, 'I am not master of my son's conscience and reason, and though he may differ from me as to the way in which God is to be worshipped, that forms no sufficient reason why I should cast him out from house and home.'"

"How could I ever say that?" exclaimed Mohendro. "I should be hooted from society; no one

would eat with me, no one would associate with me, if I gave utterance to such a thought. No, rather than that, let me die; death is better than dishonor."

"Baboo, I am sorry for you," said the missionary gently, "and wish from the bottom of my heart that I could help you, but that seems impossible. One thing, however, you must remember: it is Hindooism, not our religion of love, that causes this terrible separation. Had I a son who forsook Christianity and became an infidel, or a follower of Mohammed, my religion would teach me to love and support him still, to use him tenderly, to try to win him back to the paths of holiness and truth by the most gentle and affectionate means. Your religion under the same circumstances enjoins that you should cast away the erring child, (erring as you believe him to be;) turn him out of house and home, and tear yourself from his love. Now, Baboo, I appeal to your conscience and to your feeling, which of the two religions has justice and mercy on its side?"

Mohendro was moved, and the big tears coursed one another down his cheek. "This grief was

written on my forehead,"* he exclaimed, "and I suppose I must bear it. But cannot, oh! cannot I escape it?" he continued, turning to the missionary; "do, in compassion to my weakness, advise the boy not to leave his old father; oh do, sir; and the blessings of our whole household will descend on you and yours."

"My good friend," replied the missionary, weeping too, "your son is at perfect liberty to act as he pleases, but you must not ask me to advise him to choose Hindooism and abjure Christianity; I cannot do that."

"Come, come, father," said Surjo and Chondro both at once, "it is no use staying here. You need not suppose this fellow will help us; he gets a thousand rupees for every convert he baptizes; and we may trust any padré† for letting slip an opportunity for making money. Come away; we shall get justice elsewhere."

False and irritating as was this accusation, the missionary made no reply, but mildly begged that

* The Hindoos believe each man's fate to be written in the lines of his skull.

† Missionaries are generally called *padres* in India. The idea that they are paid so much a head for converts is very general among the Hindoos.

Prosonno might now be left alone. The two elder brothers, enraged beyond measure, dragged their father out of the room; but Nobo still lingered behind.

"Brother," he whispered, "you will not leave me to perish in Hindooism:—for that Hindooism is false I already see; you will instruct me in Christianity, and then we shall both be Christians together."

"My dearest boy," said Prosonno, "if anything could tempt me to delay a public profession of Christianity, it would be the hope of bringing you with me to the feet of Jesus; but even for this I cannot endanger my own soul's salvation. I will give you a Bible, Nobo, but I cannot go home with you."

Well was it for Prosonno that he was thus firm; for Nobo's specious speech had been put into his mouth by his wily brother Surjo, who had shrewdly guessed it would prove a better argument towards the gaining of their point than anything that had gone before. But on hearing this decided negative to his proposition the disappointed Nobo turned to go.

"Stay," said Prosonno, "I must have one word

with you, Nobo, before you leave me. Give my wife my warmest love; tell her, if I have injured her, she must forgive me; I could not have acted otherwise than I have done. Tell her I now belong to the pure, the holy religion on which I held my last sweet conversation with her; and above all, tell her, entreat her to come and join me, to take my God as her God. Tell her, she will never repent it. Nobo, tell her He will guide her until death, and then receive her into everlasting glory."

Nobo scarcely waited to hear the conclusion of his brother's sentence. In a moment he was gone, and Prosonno was left alone with the missionary. His long pent-up feelings now found vent in a flood of tears.

"O God!" he exclaimed, "Thou only knowest the agonizing trial this meeting has been to me, and I thank Thee for having supported me through it."

But we must return to Mohendro and his sons, and follow them to their home. No sooner had they reached the threshold, than all the inmates of the house came crowding round them, and waited in breathless anxiety to hear the result of

their interview with Prosonno. It was soon told. Every countenance fell.

"He refused to come back to me; to her who bore him!" exclaimed Prosonno's mother; and the poor woman fell senseless on the floor; for in the secret recesses of the Hindoo mother's heart springs up the same deep, deathless love, that flows from the bosom of the English mother to the child she has borne. Kaminee's grief was more silent, but not the less deep. She seemed determined to disguise her feelings, and with all the pride of injured woman exclaimed:—

"He has made me a widow in the bloom of my youth, and I shall yet have my revenge. The gods are holy and just; they will never let him go unpunished!"

"Oh no," said Nobo; "he has not made you a widow, he wants you to join him; he has sent you a message;" and he repeated it to Kaminee, not in the sweet spirit in which Prosonno spoke the words, but in a tone of bitter raillery, adding—

"Of course you will go, sister, and the next thing we shall hear of you will be that you have been making merry at a feast, where men were your companions, where the viands were the

loathsome flesh of the cow and the hog, and where the drink was intoxicating liquor."*

"Silence, Nobo," said Kaminee angrily. "But tell me, do you really mean to say that your brother had the effrontery to ask me to go to him?"

"Of course he had," replied Nobo: "I have told you his exact words."

"Then here is my answer," exclaimed Kaminee; "instead of love, tell him I send him deadliest hate; instead of forgiveness, vengeance and anger; tell him it is my religion which is pure and holy; his is unclean and bestial; tell him, I loathe him, I despise him, and as sure as the sun will rise in the heavens, so surely shall I utter a curse on his name before the altar of my God."

"Softly, softly, daughter," said Mohendro sadly, "is he not your husband still? Oh! then do not curse him; have patience;" and a smile passed his face as he exclaimed, "have patience, Kaminee, we shall reclaim him yet, and yet be happy."

During the evening of the same day, the mis-

* A suggestion unspeakably disgusting to the Brahmin, who never tastes flesh or liquors.

sionary, in whose house Prosonno had taken refuge, received a summons to appear before a court of justice on the morrow, bringing with him the body of the minor he had forcibly abducted from such a place on such a day. This was the legal wording of the document. The missionary, of course, prepared to obey it; but how different was the manner in which the ensuing night was spent in his house to that in which its hours were employed in the dwelling of Mohendro. The home of the Hindoo was all noise and confusion, wailing and lamentation; at one moment an angry deity was propitiated with offerings and gifts, and the spirits of Prosonno's friends rose as the priest declared he could perceive omens which augured success to their plan; at the next moment, when they remembered Prosonno's resolute refusal to return to Hindooism, and thought of his fixed will and ever-determined spirit, their hearts died within them, and they knew he was gone from them never to return.

In the Christian's dwelling another scene presented itself. During the early part of the night, one might have looked into a quiet room, and seen three individuals sitting round a table with

the holy volume of inspiration before them, studying its blessed truths. These three were Prosonno, the missionary, and his wife.

They read together of the glorious things God had reserved for those that love Him. The advanced Christians encouraged the new convert, and he felt that he never before had experienced anything so sweet as real, heartfelt sympathy, proceeding from love to the Lord Jesus Christ. They then knelt in prayer, heart joining with heart in beseeching God to preserve Prosonno on the coming day, to give him grace to make a good confession before men, and to bring him forth out of the furnace like silver purified and ready for the Master's use. The prayer finished, they each retired to rest, and calm and holy was their repose until morning dawned.

At length the time for the trial approached, and the court was crowded with expectant listeners. "Christianity will be foiled this time," exclaimed a bigoted old Brahmin. "Nay," said another, "it is we who shall be defeated; as their own Shastre predicts, no weapon that is formed against Christianity seems to prosper."

"But, Mohendro," said a third, "is rich; he

will leave nothing untried; surely by bribes and by presents he will be able to gain his point."

"And we have another thing in our favor," exclaimed a fourth; "the magistrate is not one of those saintly Christians who always side with the padrés; he is a liberal-minded man, and will be sure to see us righted, although we are Hindoos."

These remarks were interrupted by the entrance into the court's verandah of a closely-curtained palanquin. Such an unusual spectacle attracted all eyes, and the people's astonishment was heightened, when they saw a female, evidently rich and respectable, alight from it. This was the mother of Prosonno; she had never before appeared in public, and it was a heavy blow to the family pride that she did so now. Surjo and Chondro had violently opposed the measure, but all to no purpose. What were forms and usages to her when her child's well-being was at stake? She would brave ridicule and insult to see her boy once more. He must yield to her. He could never resist the appeal which only a mother's heart can make. Buoyed up with hopes such as these, the poor woman walked up through the crowd

towards the bench. Although she was deeply veiled, and immediately surrounded by her husband and sons; although her case was so urgent and her grief so heavy, still the lip of scorn was everywhere pointed at her, and one or two of the spectators, more daring and more unkind than the rest, did not hesitate to insult her openly with the expression of every variety of coarse and unfeeling jest. The magistrate saw this. His English feelings were moved at the indignity offered to the suffering woman, and beckoning to Mohendro, he showed him a private room, where Prosonno's mother might wait unmolested until the arrival of her son. A few moments elapsed, and then Prosonno entered. He was supported on one side by the missionary, and on the other by his Christian friend, Rám Doyal, who had himself passed through a similar scene of trial, and was now whispering words of comfort and hope to his afflicted brother. Two European gentlemen also, friends of the missionary, accompanied this little party, to act as a guard, in case Prosonno's relatives should attempt to use any violence towards him. The moment the crowd

caught sight of the young man a buzz of exultation arose.

"We are sure of gaining our cause," was heard on every side. "See how faint and ill the boy looks. The padres must have kept him in close confinement. Shame upon them. Their evil practices will come out now." The trial then proceeded with the usual forms. Soon it was proved, to the entire satisfaction of all, that the missionary, far from abducting Prosonno, had received him into his house, only at his own most urgent request. Granting this to be true, Mohendro now deposed that his son was under age, and on this ground required him to be restored to his guardianship. The magistrate shook his head, remarking—"To me the lad looks as if he had almost attained our English age of majority, instead of being, as you say, a minor, according to Hindoo law; but what have you in proof of your assertion that your son is under age?" Mohendro immediately produced Prosonno's horoscope, supposed to have been drawn out on the day of his birth. According to this document, his age was just fifteen years and nine months. But the moment Prosonno saw it he sprang up

with unaffected indignation, exclaiming, "You do not mean to say, father, that is my horoscope; indeed, sir, it is not mine;" and the magistrate at once perceived it was a forgery. Merely observing therefore that the paper looked remarkably clean and new, he continued, "Religion is a subject on which every individual, able to discriminate between truth and falsehood, must be allowed the right of private judgment. I shall therefore question your son, and if I find him of sound mind and good understanding, shall leave him at liberty to follow the dictates of his own conscience." Prosonno's friends were prepared for this emergency, and Surjo immediately stepped forward to say—

"I am the elder brother of that young man, sir, and am ready to take my oath that he has been imbecile since his birth, and is not accountable for any of his actions."

"Your brother shall speak for himself," answered the magistrate sternly, "and then we shall soon be able to decide on the truth of your statement. Now, young man," he continued, turning to Prosonno, "did you, as has been deposed by this missionary gentleman, go to his house yester-

day morning and beg to be allowed to remain there?"

"I did, sir," answered Prosonno, "and had I consulted my own wishes only I should have left my home a month since; but he it was who desired me to wait and consider the subject maturely before I made the important decision; and it was only yesterday, when he felt satisfied I had done so, that he consented to receive me."

"And what were your reasons for determining to become a Christian?" asked the magistrate.

"In the first place, sir," said Prosonno, "I knew that the idolatrous worship of Hindooism must be utterly false; in the second place, I believed Christianity to be the true religion revealed by God to man, and therefore I determined to adopt it."

"What led you to this belief, young man?" said the magistrate.

"Sir," said Prosonno, "it would be out of place here were I to lay before you the evidences of Christianity; let me assure you, however, I have studied them with attention, and feel satisfied in my own mind that my choice has been made in accordance with God's will."

"But let me ask you to name some of those evidences, for the satisfaction of your friends?"

Well did Prosonno reply to this question, showing how clear were the grounds upon which he had decided to change his religion, and how ready he was to endure all griefs that he might attain everlasting life, and honor the Saviour.

When Prosonno had concluded every eye was turned, in breathless expectation, to the magistrate. Each thinking man among that great crowd felt that Christianity had triumphed. One exclaimed:—"Well, the padrés have made good use of their time with that young man, at any rate!" A white-headed Brahmin moved sadly and silently out of the court, murmuring to himself, "Our gods are fallen, are fallen." Others gnashed their teeth at the missionary, in impotent rage.

Mohendro alone seemed to hope on. He had heard Prosonno's words indeed, but they had conveyed no meaning to his mind; he had stood as if in a dream, his whole soul filled with one agonizing anxiety,—that of being able to call his son his own once more: and now that he had fin-

ished speaking, the poor old man, scarce conscious of what he did, clasped the feet of the magistrate, exclaiming hurriedly, "He may go home with us now, may he not, sir?" Even the official was moved; but he replied, decidedly though kindly, "No, I cannot oblige your son to do that; he has embraced Christianity, and given most excellent reasons for so doing; he is at liberty to go where he will, and will return, I suppose, as he came, with the missionary." Mohendro uttered a scream and would have fallen had not Surjo and Chondro, who had foreseen the termination of this dreaded scene, stepped forward and supported him. "He has not yet seen his mother," said Mohendro. The magistrate heard his words, and said immediately, "Young man, I had forgotten; your mother waits for you in the adjoining room; go to her, and go alone."

Prosonno turned to the door indicated, his whole frame quivering with excess of emotion. In vain he attempted to walk with his wonted firm step, silent agony convulsed his every movement, his hand was cold as marble, and, as if to gain a momentary relief, he pressed it over his burning brow, where the large veins, distended

and swollen, told the tale of anguish he would fain have concealed. Involuntarily a prayer escaped his lips, "Saviour, thou of woman born, look and pity;" and Prosonno was in his mother's presence.

"My treasure, my moon, the star of my life, what have my ears heard this day," she exclaimed, bursting into a flood of bitter tears, "that you are going to leave me? Leave me who have borne you in sorrow, and loved you from your babyhood, have nourished and cherished you till you have become a man! You leave me! No, no, it is all a dream, a hideous dream; but it is past, we are awake now; you will go home with us, my boy; yes, yes; I know you will."

"Mother, mother," exclaimed Prosonno, "this is killing me. Oh, desist! or you will drive me mad. My God! this is a sacrifice, but not too costly for thine altar," murmured the poor young man in vainly suppressed agony. "Mother, you must let me go!"

"Let you go? Never—never! jewel of my existence," shrieked the heart-broken woman, clasping her son in her arms, and resting her head on his shoulder, while she poured forth a gush of Ori-

ental imagery, at one time the most touchingly plaintive, at another, frantic with wild despair. "How dark it is! no sun, no moon, no stars, all have set in wrath. Woe is me! What have I done to bring down this curse on my head? My child, you have been the light of our house; will you leave it dark, and cold, and drear? I cannot live without you; your love has been to me what the dew is to the flowers; what the cool shady thicket is to the hunted fawn; what the protecting boughs of the peepul tree are to the little birds when lightnings are abroad; what the luscious melon with its rills of sugared juice is to the traveler in the desert. I cannot live without you, my moon of gold, my star of silver, my necklace of pearl, my diamond, my jewel, my bird, my heart-treasure. Oh, if you do not return your mother must die, must die. Bring me the poison cup, I will drink it; pierce my heart with a dagger, and let my life blood flow ere I see the child I have nursed and cherished leave me to herd with unclean Christians, with filthy outcasts. Pah! must that sweet mouth, never touched by anything but fruit and milk and sweetmeats, be defiled with the accursed flesh of

the heifer and the hog! Must those coral lips, which have never quaffed aught but heaven's own drinks, the limpid water, or the juice of the cocoa and the palm, be now stained and besmeared with that disgusting, reason-destroying English liquor they call wine? Pah! it must not be! it must not be!" shrieked the half-frantic woman in unaffected horror.

"Mother, mother," interposed Prosonno, speaking wildly and hurriedly; "do not, oh, I entreat you, do not go on in this way; I cannot tell you how precious your love is to me, more precious than aught else, except my Saviour and my duty." But he checked himself, for he felt he might as soon speak his thoughts to the winds.

"Saviour!" "Duty!" The words conveyed no meaning to the poor ignorant Hindoo woman; while Prosonno, almost involuntarily, gave passionate vent to his grief in the words he had somewhere read; "A terrible sacrifice thou claimest, O God, from creatures in whose agonizing hearts nature is strong as Death."

But the sacrifice was offered; he repented it not, recalled it not; but casting one last look of love

towards his mother, he rushed into the open air. The next moment found him surrounded by his Christian friends, on his way to his Christian home.



CHAPTER V.

SABBATH evening had now arrived; Prosonno had spent the greater part of the day in earnest prayer to God to fit him for the holy service on which he was entering. All fear of his heathen relatives carrying him off forcibly, or using personal violence to himself, had entirely passed away, for it was now five days since he had seen them. It was with a lightened and grateful heart, therefore, that he stepped into the carriage, that was to convey him, with the missionary and his faithful friend Rám Doyal, to the place of baptism. The missionary gave directions to the coachman to drive to their usual house of worship, and taking his seat, said cheerfully, "Now thanks be to God who has brought this painful business to such a happy issue." He did not then know that his young disciple had yet a fiery trial awaiting him, out of which he should come forth like silver seven times refined.



Fifty armed men surrounded them instantly

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A few minutes' drive brought them to a turn in the road, slightly more secluded than that which they had already traversed. Prosonno's mind was engaged in preparing a reply to the questions he anticipated would be put to him at his baptism, while the good missionary seemed lost in a reverie. He was looking into the future, and a bright vision rose up before his mental eye. Rám Doyal alone was not at ease. He looked suspiciously among the trees. At length he appeared to see something, and sprang out of the carriage, exclaiming, "I feared it; I feared this was but a false peace." But it was all too late. Mohendro's influence and money had bribed the retainers of a wealthy acquaintance, and fifty armed men surrounded them instantly. To drive through the crowd was impossible. Two men took hold of the horses' heads; three others dragged the coachman from the box and kept him prisoner: while Rám Doyal, with a bravery of which the Bengalee is said to be incapable, was wrestling hand to hand with two athletic soldiers from the Punjab, who stayed his progress in going for help; when Surjo's voice was heard calling out, "Fools, let the Christian dog alone;

it is my brother, men—my brother—that we want."

To push the missionary violently to one side of the road, and drag the defenseless Prosonno out of the carriage, was the work of a second. The next found him bruised and blindfolded at the bottom of another vehicle, which dashed over the stones with the speed of lightning.

The missionary and Rám Doyal stood as in a dream. In a moment, as if by magic, their convert, horses, carriages, armed men, all had disappeared, and they were left in utter darkness! The ruffians had accomplished their object; to elude justice was now their only care. With heavy hearts the two Christians pursued their way to the church, but they were not utterly cast down: for a still small voice whispered, "Lo, I am with you alway." At length the missionary broke out with the words; "What an iniquitous piece of business; Rám Doyal! We must bring it before the civil authorities to-morrow morning."

"Sir," replied Rám Doyal, "if I might venture to make a suggestion, I should say, No, to that proposition."

"Indeed, why so?"

"Because, sir, notwithstanding all we may say to the contrary, there certainly is a floating idea among the people, that Christianity progresses in India because it is the religion of the conquerors of the country; and I think we ought to avoid any act which might tend to foster an idea so hostile to Christianity. Suppose we apply to the magistrate and succeed through him in discovering my poor friend, which I confess appears to me exceedingly improbable; we could not avoid the impression going abroad that he became a Christian through the interference of the British Government."

The missionary replied musingly, "There is something in that: but would you do nothing for poor Prosonno?"

"Only what the Church did for Peter; pray for him unceasingly; he belongs to that flock of whom it is written, 'not one of them shall perish;' and mark my words, sir, he will be delivered safe to us again."

"But are you not afraid of personal violence for him? These great Hindoo families are not strangers to the properties of poisons, and know how to use them too; do they not? Female dis-

honor is often hidden in death; do you think they would hesitate to use the same means to put a son out of the way, where that son was likely to cast an indelible blot on the family name? Or, even if they considered this as going too far, they might administer to him, what always seemed to me to be a device of Satan's own, that mind-destroying drug so well-known in these parts. To think of that noble intellect being crushed forever. I dare not contemplate it?"

"Pardon me, sir, but I cannot think it likely his friends would resort to such measures. I would fain believe that the stories we hear respecting these matters are exaggerated."

"I am thankful to hear you say so, Rám Doyal; God grant that our dear young friend be preserved from all evil; but I feel sad, very sad for him."

To return to the party in the carriage. For some moments, neither of the two brothers spoke a word. Prosonno was stunned. The faith, the hope, the holy joy that a moment before had been his, whither had they flown? The darkness that wrapt his physical vision was not more dense than the darkness that had fallen upon his heart.

"Was there a God in heaven after all?" "If Christ were God indeed, would He have allowed so shameful a defeat to His cause as this?" were questions that came across his mind, but died away unanswered on his lips. "Oh, would to heaven," exclaimed the young man in the bitterness of his grief, "would to heaven that the whole universe were annihilated if it were only just to settle by fair experiment whether Christianity or Hindooism had the slightest claim to truth."

Courage! poor faltering disciple. The tempter has laid his deep snares for you; and for the moment he has well nigh prevailed. He has landed you at the very bottom of the bottomless pit; but courage! a Greater than he hath the key of that pit, and He will lead you safely; it may be by a way that you know not; but be assured He will lead you safely into the sunlight of His presence!

Surjo saw that his brother Prosonno's thoughts were wandering far from the immediate cause of trouble, for instead of trying to free himself, he was lying as he had been thrown, motionless at the bottom of the carriage; and yet he was not seriously hurt. His brother had prevented that.

Interpreting his stillness to imply indifference on the subject of going home, or perhaps even positive pleasure that he had thus been rescued, before he had made the final sacrifice, and knowing that all fear of a pursuit was ended now, Surjo briskly tore off the bandages from his eyes, and attempted jocosely to rally his brother. It was a feeble attempt at best. The moment he caught sight of his brother's pale, sorrow-stricken face, he saw that the arrow had entered into his soul, and he changed his tone to one of persuasion and remonstrance.

"Come, come, Prosonno," he said, "I am sure if the truth were known, you are as glad as I am, that you are well out of the hands of those Christians, with their abominable practices and delusive hopes."

"Delusive or not, I was happy in them an hour ago; and what have you given me in their place? The blackness of despair; for a Hindoo I will never, never be again. You will make me an infidel, and the life and death of an infidel are worse than the life and death of a beast. That I well know. Yes, it is coming to that. Heaven, earth, hell, are all disappearing. O God (if there be a

God), blot me out of this hateful universe." Surjo was not prepared for this sudden outburst, but he was wily enough to take advantage of it.

"Just so, brother," he said, "just so. If your God had been really God, could he not have delivered you out of my hands? Your God, indeed! The cudgels of a few strong Rajpoots proved stronger than He, when put to the proof! And you were about to trust yourself to a God like that? A good thing I am sure, that there are some people in the family left in possession of their senses, or you would have been I know not where by this time!" Were not these words a very echo of those suggested by Satan to Prosonno's own heart but a moment ago? And yet coming from the lips of another, and clothed as they were now in this tangible form, they roused the better spirit of the young man, and he exclaimed almost fiercely,

"Do not blaspheme; do not blaspheme. What did I say? Forget what I said. My God is God; He will save me yet. He has a purpose to accomplish by this; yes, a purpose, and you shall feel it and acknowledge it."

Prosonno did not himself then know the ter-

rible import of his words, nor how literally they were destined to be accomplished at a later period.

"Where are you taking me?" he next inquired; "we are not on our way home."

"Home!" replied Surjo, "no, not home; your flight made that too hot for us; it used to be surrounded from morning to night by a set of impertinent priests, declaring we had all lost caste, through this foolishness of yours! Think of that, Master Prosonno! Think of our father, the pure and austere Hindoo, who never neglected a poojah in his life; think of his being told that he had now no name or place in Hindooism, and all for you, you wretch; my blood boils at the bare recollection of it, curse you!"

"Did he curse me?"

"No, he quieted the Brahmins with gifts of money as well as he could, and told them you were insane, and a thousand other things; but nothing would do; the more they got the more they wanted; it was insult and extortion, and extortion and insult, from day to day, till we could bear it no longer. And then your wife's father brought things to a climax by coming to claim

his daughter, and insinuating that we had encouraged and abetted your becoming a Christian for the sake of pecuniary gain; and that Kaminee was intended as a sacrifice on the same shrine."

"Did father let her go?"

"No, he did not," replied Surjo, eagerly drawing encouragement from the first gleam of interest that had lighted up Prosonno's languid countenance. "No, he said he would on no account part with Kaminee, for he believed that she would be the one attraction that might possibly draw you home again."

Prosonno murmured, "My darling, and I could have you again by only—but no, I must not, will not; for he that loveth father, or mother, or wife, more than Christ, is not worthy of Him; and, so help me God, I will be found worthy."

Surjo thought it best not to seem to hear, and went on—"Well, it was with great difficulty that we got your father-in-law away, and he went vowing vengeance on the whole family, in case Kaminee was persuaded to join you, and muttering something about returning at night to carry her off by stealth; but that disgrace was not to be

risked, so we adjourned to uncle's house in the country, and there you will find us all."

Prosonno asked no more questions. Escape from his uncle's house would be ten times more difficult than from their house in Calcutta; that he knew, but loving trust was fast returning to him, and to that faith stone walls and iron bars presented no barrier whatever.

Hard driving for four hours brought them to their destination. As they approached the gate, a flaring torch held out of the carriage (a sign previously agreed upon) showed the family within that Surjo had been successful; and a wild shout of triumphant *Hori Bol* ran through the halls, though it was near midnight, and retainers and household servants now joined in full chorus. Never a word did Prosonno utter, while he was literally dragged out of the carriage amid joyful congratulations and noisy vociferation; his father burst into tears and fell on his neck; while Chondro and Nobo had a thousand questions to ask respecting the plan of escape and the discomfiture of the hated missionary. But as long as the object of all this rejoicing continued dejected and silent, their triumph was incomplete; so they be-

thought themselves of sending Prosonno to the women's apartments in hope that his mother might be successful in rousing him from his seeming apathy. As he went along, Prosonno carefully took notice of each unguarded passage, or frail-looking bar, laying up his observations for future use. His mother met him in the verandah. At sight of her his long pent-up feelings found vent for the first time, and he burst into a flood of tears. "O mother, mother, this was not right of you!" he exclaimed; "why have you brought me back after all I told you in court? I am a Christian by choice, indeed I am. O mother, why did you not believe me? Now I am of all men the most miserable. You keep me from joining the Christians, and a Hindoo I can never be again. I see no shore to my sea."

"But why should you not be a Hindoo again, my boy?" asked his mother, mistaking his meaning; "atonement shall be made for you; we will spare no expense. Oh! my child, we would rather beggar ourselves to the last farthing, than that you should be put out of caste. Besides, you have not really lost caste. You have not been baptized. That hateful charm has not been ut-

tered in your ear. The morsel of beef has not been put into your mouth! Oh! say it has not!"

"No, mother, of course not; nor would it have been had I been baptized. Baptism has no charm nor montro, nor has it anything whatever to do with food. It is a washing with pure water, in token of faith, that thus the soul is purified from all sin and uncleanness."

"So they made you believe," said the woman; "so they made you believe: you would have found it as I tell you; but the gods be praised, that calamity has been averted. Prosonno, would you not like to see your wife again, your beautiful, your much loved wife?" she continued. "I know you would; but no wife can be yours, until you have made full atonement. Kaminee said she would rather die than see you whilst you are out of caste; so that the sooner you make up your mind the better. To the Christians you do not return: your alternatives are these; either a life of imprisonment and suffering, or your former life, as the darling of the family, the light of our dwelling."

"Then I choose the former," said the noble young man. "O mother, I had wished to see

Kaminee to-night, I had so much to say to her. But since that is denied me, show me into a room; I want to be alone; to think and to pray."

The poor mother hardly knew her son again. His very phraseology was altered. "What is it to pray?" she thought. But she did not think long about that. Her mother's instinct told her he wanted rest, and putting him into a quiet though well-guarded room, she left him with a sad countenance and an anxious heart.

Except in the case of Prosonno, who snatched a couple of hours' refreshing sleep towards the morning, no other eye of all that vast household was closed in slumber that night. The Brahmins were sent for to plan and devise how the erring one might be received into caste, as quickly as possible. They were all of one opinion; Prosonno must give his full and free consent, or the thing could not be done. The atonement was to be made by the young man shaving off the hair of his head, and his moustache, before some idol shrine, and then offering some hundred rupees' worth of cowrie shells, which were afterwards to be taken by the Brahmins. These Brahmins were also to have large gifts in money, and a

sumptuous feast. Thus it was supposed the justice of their gods would be satisfied, their anger be appeased, and the sinner be saved!

But the morning brought with it no change in the constancy of Prosonno. He deeply felt the degradation of having his breakfast served out to him, much in the same fashion as it would have been to a dog, and that in a house where every one but a few days since would have delighted to do him honor. But even this disgrace he knew had been borne by his Master, when in the house of the proud Pharisee; He was denied the salutation kiss and the anointing oil that would have been accorded had he come of a higher caste; and Prosonno loved to suffer with his Master.

His relatives grew more and more anxious, and determined to carry out a system of operations that had proved successful in similar cases. Knowing that Christianity is a religion of holiness, and that no men of evil lives care to embrace it, they were ready utterly to corrupt his moral nature, and lead him by the practice of wickedness from the religion which he had in heart embraced. Wine and dancing-girls were on several occasions

introduced into the house, and, as if in kindness, he was urged by their means to shake off the sadness in which he lived. But strong in faith, putting his whole trust in the mighty help of God, he was able to resist the spells and sorceries that had been prepared for his ruin. He resolutely shut himself up in the silence of his own room, which he barred against the intrusion of temptations so dangerous.

Many bitter days followed in Prosonno's history. The plans of his relatives had been frustrated; their money had been thrown away; each moment the priests were becoming more clamorous that the atonement should be made; failing that, they threatened to put the whole family out of caste for harboring a Christian. They wanted their gifts, and they knew this threat would hasten them. The mother's heart yearned to embrace her son. The wife pined in her widowhood. Grief and shame were fast doing their work on the old father; his hair had grown whiter, and his step less steady, during the last few days. The stern and bigoted Surjo, who considered himself in some sort the head of the family, bit his lip with rage each time a slur was cast on the

honor of that family. The uncle hinted he had had enough of strange doings in his house, and that he would be glad to be left in quiet once more. The grandmother, sad, silent, tearful, stole softly backwards and forwards from Prosonno's room, (now become a prisoner's cell), and said nothing. But she watched, and watched, and watched; what did the old woman suspect? She had constituted herself Prosonno's sole attendant; everything that he ate she prepared with her own hands, and she was jealous lest any one should do aught for her favorite. Perhaps it was this that made her so watchful.

His relatives had almost given up speaking to the young Christian, except to load him with abuse. Wine, pleasure, money, all had been offered him in vain. Hindooism had nothing more to offer; so now it resorted to persecution, to cruelty, to abuse. But for his grandmother, who insisted that starvation was not the way to win him over, Prosonno would have been fed on rice and water. As it was, every luxury and comfort were denied him. His bed was taken away, smoking was forbidden; coarse clothes were substituted for his fine ones; he was not allowed

to go to either tank or river for the purposes of bathing, (an immense privation to a Bengalee); and, worst of all, he had no books, no writing materials, no employment of any kind. Constitutions less tenderly organized have suffered under such an ordeal as this. A man could hardly go through it, and come out unchanged. Surjo seemed to calculate on this. He constantly affirmed that his brother was insane, and that he was not accountable for his actions; though an unprejudiced examiner would have discovered nothing beyond the deep dejection of his mind, consequent on the painful circumstances in which he was placed. However that might be, he managed to raise the question among the Brahmins, (without seeming to be the propounder of it), whether or not atonement could be made for a man out of his senses. There was much discussion on the subject, and a variety of opinions was expressed. Only on one point the disputants were agreed; that atonement was impossible, unless the subject of it were willing thus to receive absolution. Just as they arrived at this conclusion, Surjo by chance happened to pass through the room.

"It seems to me, gentlemen," he remarked, with a slight degree of irritation and impatience in his tone; "it seems to me, that you are wasting your time over a mere quibble. An idiot may be persuaded to anything, and, I fancy, would make no stronger objection to having his sins pardoned in any way you chose, than he would make to a good dinner. Why not say at once, an idiot may be saved?"

"Ah, I see, I see," muttered the oldest Brahmin, on whose clouded intellects Surjo's words seemed to have thrown a new light. "Well, then, suppose we do say that a man out of his senses may be put all right."

"Thank the gods that admission is something tangible at last," murmured Surjo between his teeth, as he glided, snake-like, out of the apartment.

In the meanwhile, the ladies, always the most credulous, the most superstitious, and the most loving of the human family, set on foot a curious ceremony, the purpose of which was to gain back for his wife those lost affections which he and the rest foolishly believed Prosonno had bestowed on some strange woman among the Christians. A

wily magician was sent for, a Brahmin of the very lowest class. His peculiar talent lay in the art of *Bosee Koron*, or making one man subject to another; and Kaminee, with tears in her eyes, related every particular of her sad story, and begged him to use all his divinations, to make her husband's heart yield to her once more, as it was wont to do in times past. He declared he could accomplish this difficult matter, but only with immense pain and danger to himself; and that, therefore it would cost a great deal of money. Kaminee readily agreed to his demand, and so he proceeded with his incantations. He first asked for a suitable apartment in the house, where he erected a small rude altar to Chondi, one of the numerous forms of the goddess Durgá, surrounded the shrine with leaves of the mango tree, and offered on it rice, vermillion, and other such articles. Ten whole days, the magician said, he must spend before this idol, repeating various charms and prayers. For the next ten days, a prayer must be daily offered at a place where three roads meet. For ten days after that, incantations and offerings were to be presented to the Ganges; and, most horrible of all, the three days

succeeding those were to be spent by the magician at the burning-place of the dead, amid half-consumed bodies, dying men, and corpses, in every stage of putrefaction; the last rite of all being that he should get the corpse of a Pariah, and seating himself on its chest, he should invoke Durgá with special earnestness. It was expected that the goddess would then appear to him. If he had the presence of mind to say, at the right moment, "Holy mother, now thou art here; grant me my request,"—then all would be well, and on the thirty-third day, Kaminee would find her husband all her own again; but if, on the contrary, the magician were to allow evil thoughts to fill his heart at the sight of the goddess, then the ghost of the dead Pariah, on whose body he was seated, would suddenly appear, leap on him, and strangle him, and he would never be heard of more!

But, oh, those long three-and-thirty days! How were their weary hours to be dragged along, while a foul outcast remained in the house, while the family was threatened with a suspension of all its religious privileges! No, they could not wait, it was impossible; something else must be

done. So, at least, thought Surjo. Besides, he had not much faith in the magician's power over a Christian. "Physical force is the only thing for these men," muttered he; "as for charms, we have tried those already; but they have a counter-charm ready for all emergencies." Surjo went out frequently during the next few days, and had one followed him, it would have appeared that the end of all his walks was the abode of a hideous hag or sorceress, in a lowly spot many miles away. There were women of the same character much nearer home. It was impossible to say why Surjo did not consult them. His grandmother alone seemed to guess at some reason, for each time he came in, she watched his every look and action; though so long as he kept away from her favorite Prosonno, the old lady seemed satisfied.

At length, to the astonishment of all, even of the priests, Surjo gave out that in two days full atonement would be made by his younger brother for his sin of going among the Christians. This he declared had been intimated to him in private by Prosonno, who, after holding out so long, was now naturally shy of publicly recanting; but the

grandmother, who alone of all the family had constant intercourse with him, saw no symptoms of a change. However, the preparations for the rite of atonement went on, and great rejoicings prevailed in the house. As his grandmother was going into Prosonno's room with his supper that night, Surjo stopped her, as if by accident, saying: "Here, Thákur Má, I have been brewing some sherbet for myself; you may as well take Prosonno a glass of it, as a loving cup from his brother."

"I am glad to see you acting in rather a more brotherly way lately, Surjo," replied the grandmother, while she took the glass out of his hand. As soon as he was out of sight, she coolly threw the contents out of the window, murmuring, "There! that puts an end to our grand feast of atonement, but I cannot help it. I cannot have that glorious intellect destroyed." To get some more sherbet ready, and give it to Prosonno from his brother, was the work of a moment. As she presented it, Prosonno looked inquiringly at her, merely saying—

"From Surjo, grandmother?"

"Yes, boy, drink it. I say so."

His grandmother had never deceived him yet, and so he drank the delicious draught.

The whole of the next day, Surjo appeared very uneasy. He did not go into Prosonno's apartment, but he hung round it, as if expecting to hear some startling news; but his grandmother went in and out, and had nothing to communicate. The great day of the feast arrived. Nothing could control his impatience. Now he burst into his brother's room saying—

"Come now, Prosonno; you promised you would make atonement to-day: come all is ready."

"Promised what? I don't know what you mean, brother," exclaimed the astonished young man. "Oh, it is all very fine to say so now," replied Surjo in a passion of rage. "Don't you remember telling me the day before yesterday, that you repented of your errors, and were ashamed of your folly, as well you might be, you young fool! And now you pretend to have forgotten again!"

"I repent of nothing, and the only error I am ashamed of is the error of having remained a Hindoo so long, worshipping idols instead of the

God of heaven and earth," quietly answered Prosonno.

"Hear him," exclaimed Surjo, "this in a Hindoo house, surrounded by Brahmin priests! But he is mad; that is the fact of the matter. I always knew he was mad, but people would not believe me. Will they believe it now?"

"I don't see it:" muttered the head priest, who began to think he had been trifled with, in the matter of the ceremony of that day; "but we grant that it may be so. You said, Surjo Baboo, that an insane man might be persuaded to anything, pray be quick then, and persuade this mad brother of yours; for our rites wait for no one, and unless the atonement be fulfilled this very day, I and my fellow Brahmins leave this house under our censure and CURSE. You have had a Christian living here this fortnight, and yet you pretend to be orthodox Hindoos! Stuff and nonsense! We will not bear it any longer."

In vain Surjo raged, and declared it was madness to listen to madmen, and folly to hearken to fools. Prosonno was both a madman and a fool; and surely atonement might be made for him, and he be restored to caste, without all this fuss on

the subject of willingness and unwillingness? But the Brahmins were firm; and even had they been inclined to yield, Prosonno dashed all their hopes to the ground, by saying in his calmest manner, "The moment I am set free again I shall return to the Christians. Your money and your pains will all be thrown away on me."

"You shall never return to the Christians," almost shrieked out Surjo, quite livid with passion.

"I am prepared for that," replied Prosonno; "this room will prove my grave, with you for my guardian; I see that plainly enough; but for that very reason am I the more determined not to yield up my Christian faith. I have served Satan all my life, and had hoped that I might be spared yet some years to serve Christ. But if that is denied me, I rejoice to have at least this one opportunity of testifying my love for Him. He has promised that if I am faithful unto death, He will give me a crown of life. You have nothing like that to offer me."

"And you believe that nonsense?" asked a dozen voices.

"Yes, I believe it fully, firmly," said Prosonno.

"Then those Christians do use sorceries and enchantments; they have bewitched you," cried out the chief Brahmin.

"As you please," replied Prosonno. "It is quite true that the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It is like a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces. The sharpness of that sword has cut through prejudices that date back as far as my babyhood. That fire has consumed the love of sin in me, though alas! I still sin, for what I would not, that I do. And that hammer has broken in pieces this hard heart, and made it melt at the remembrance of Jesus' love. But beyond this, I know of no sorcery or enchantment, nor will anything that you can say deprive me of my hope. You can kill me outright; but you cannot change my mind."

"I doubt whether I can ever kill him," thought Surjo, who like all thorough idolaters was blindly superstitious, and who believed, in spite of all his brother might say, that he certainly did possess some counter-charm to his machinations. "I cannot conceive how that poison could fail to act. The old hag told me that in twenty four hours it

would be certain to send its victim raving mad, for a time at least; and then I have known so many instances; how is it? I cannot make it out; I wonder if he ever drank that draught." Such was the burden of Surjo's soliloquy, while he said aloud——

"Well, I suppose you want me to disbelieve the evidence of my own senses. I tell you I won't, young man; I repeat that, the day before yesterday, you promised me that the atonement should be made on this day, and it shall be made." "I never promised," replied Prosonno; "and your foolish, impious atonement shall not be made: I am a free agent in that at least, thank God. You must either be a dreamer or a liar, Surjo, to say that I promised anything of the sort."

"That to me! That to your elder brother!" shouted Surjo; "but hold, I have proofs: did you, or did you not drink a cup of sherbet I sent you in token of our compact on the night of which I speak?"

"I drank the cup of sherbet, and grandmother said it was from you; but I heard of no compact, and acknowledge none," returned Prosonno.

"Foiled again," muttered Surjo; "he has a charm, I am sure he has. Ah! those vile Christian sorcerers!"

Mohendro here interposed with tears in his eyes. "Let the boy go, my son," he said, "we shall have no more comfort in him. Surely I must have committed some unpardonable sin in a former birth to have drawn down such a curse on my head! Oh! what a fool you are, Prosonno. If you only knew how contrary to your own interests you are acting; but I might as well talk to the wind as to you."

"And to just as much purpose, father," replied Prosonno; "if it is my religion that you wish me to change, that I will not do."

"There we have heard quite enough of that," said his uncle angrily; "this is my house, Surjo, and I insist on that senseless fellow being turned out of it. Let the Brahmins change this day's ceremony to the purification of us all from the sin of having harbored him, and let us never name the wretch's name again."

But before this last expedient was resorted to, Surjo pleaded for a further delay of only four days.

"O uncle! father!" he exclaimed, "think of the disgrace to our family should one of its members embrace Christianity. Wait till you wish to get Hemlota a husband; you will find out your mistake then; no one will marry into a family tainted with this Christian pollution."

"Alas!" groaned the two old men, "there is no shore to our sea of misery; it seems to widen every moment. None but you, Surjo, would have thought of this; but it is too true—too true. Do as you please then about Prosonno, that is to say, if you can satisfy the priests."

"Oh, leave that to me," growled Surjo; "more money, more money, that will do it; by the way, father, this whole business will cost us many a rupee; I hope you are prepared for that."

"Be it so," rejoined Mohendro, "I will give to my last pice if I can only save my son. Oh! My son, my son!"

Surjo's character was one that is fast dying out of India. "Young Bengal" represents a class of men of loose, free-thinking ideas; religion is the last subject that ever occupies their minds; they will tell you they are neither Christians nor Hindoos; that they have adopted the good out of

each system, which means pretty much that at home they take care not to shock the prejudices of their families, while abroad they eat, drink, and enjoy whatever pleases them, without the slightest regard to caste, rite, or ritual. Their women are not more educated than those of the other class; they are just as far from the kingdom of God as their stricter brethren, though, they are in some respects less hostile to those who embrace Christianity than are the Hindoos of the old school.

Surjo belonged to the latter class. Not only a Brahmin by caste, but a priest by profession, he believed implicitly in all the formulas of Hindooism. Shrewd enough in matters of worldly wisdom, he was stupid, almost senseless, as regarded religion. Hence, that his brother should reject that ancient faith, in which he could see no absurdities, seemed to him horror beyond compare. The loss of his reason was nothing to him in comparison with loss of caste; and death itself was preferable to life, if it must be spent in apostacy and disgrace. It was not hatred to Prosonno that led Surjo to adopt the severe measures he resorted to; far from it; for, did he not risk

his own safety to save him while the rest of the family sat bemoaning at home? It was hatred to Christianity; it was dread of the shame that must fall upon the family through that Christianity, which impelled him to act as he did.

The grandmother of the two young men, on the contrary, though still a Hindoo, had no hatred to Christianity. Christianity had first dawned upon her soul in beams of love. She looked back through the vista of half a century to that dread scene on the sands of Saugor, when her mother's heart was riven to its very core; and she recalled to mind that it was a Christian Government that saved her darling; that it was Christian love that applied that relief to her own peculiar case; a Christian had spoken a few calm, holy words which had comforted her, she knew not how; she had kept the Book of the Christians carefully concealed for years; it had brought no curse, on the contrary, only a blessing. Excepting her husband, who was a very old man, no one belonging to her had died; her sons were wealthy and prosperous, and their children were like unto them; altogether it appeared to her that her long happy life was owing in some sort to Christianity.

When the rest of the family spoke of the missionary who had perverted the faith of Prosonno, and loaded him with every species of abuse, his grandmother remembered that missionary of old who had told her that the Master whom he served was a sea of love; and she would not believe that a follower of the same Master could be the unlovely and hateful character which her friends represented. Besides this, the old woman was more attached to Prosonno than to any of her sons or grandsons; and if Christianity made Prosonno happy, why not let him be a Christian?

Again she watched the bigoted elder brother. He grew more morose and irritable each day, but never mentioned Prosonno, just as if it were nothing to him what he chose to do or think. What did this calm portend? The old lady was determined to find out; and she bribed a little boy, the son of their milk-woman, whom Surjo had never seen, to follow him unperceived in one of his walks. Surjo passed through his own village, then went along the river for about three miles, until he arrived at a lonely hut, far from all habitations of men. The only door to this miserable abode (window there was none) was on the north

side, so that the genial rays of the sun never shone in. For the space of fifty yards round that hut, there was no sign of tree or green thing of any kind, as though its unhallowed air had killed all that was fresh and beautiful. Surjo stood at the door of this den, and called to some one by name. He was answered by the low growl of a half-blind cur covered with sores. There was no other living being inside, but presently a hideous old woman presented herself with some noxious herbs in her hands, which she had gathered in the jungles. Her countenance was truly dreadful to behold. Every trace of feminine softness had long been erased from those harsh features, which, owing to unbridled passions, had assumed the appearance of an animal rather than of a human being. She was covered with a single piece of filthy rag, and her matted hair seemed as if it had been untouched for years.

"You here again, Baboo!" she growled; "I thought our compact was that you should never return. Do you think I am tired of life? Do you want to get me hanged, or what?"

"I am compelled to return, mother; your med-

icine failed. You must give me a stronger potion this time," said Surjo.

"My medicine failed, indeed! Your brother no more drank that draught, than you did yourself, young man, if at this moment he is alive and of sane mind."

"Yes, he did drink it; but he is a Christian. He has charms against everything but deadly poison; he has confessed that himself," whispered Surjo, misinterpreting Prosonno's words about their being able to kill him, while they would be utterly unable to change his mind.

"Hum! I see what you want now," muttered the hag; "you are a loving brother, I must say; but that sort of thing, good sir, is not brewed except in a cup of silver, ornamented with gold. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied Surjo, opening a bag in which there appeared at least thirty or forty shining coins; "but come into the house; this is no place to discuss such matters: there may be listeners."

There had been a listener; and while that murderous brother went into the witch's den to accomplish his wicked purpose, the spy returned

to her who had sent him, and told her all. Prosonno's grandmother was in intense distress of mind. Her darling must not die—that she had determined; but to prevent it seemed beyond her power, shut up as she was within the walls of the zenana. Surjo would this time probably administer the poison himself, and then nothing could save Prosonno; for he had assured her he had no charms against poison or anything else; and she believed him. Besides, she desired at last to end his persecutions, and send him back safely to the missionary. The poor lad had grown thinner and weaker each day, and she was fearful that, even without the aid of poison, he would sink under the privations he had to endure. It may seem strange to Christian readers that this loving-hearted woman had not the moral courage to open some private entrance, and thus let Prosonno escape, or perhaps even escape with him; but every entrance to the house had been jealously guarded by Surjo, who kept the keys in his pocket. And apart from this, English readers cannot appreciate the iron strength of the trammels that bind a Hindoo female to her family and to her caste. For a man to abjure his faith is sufficiently haz-

ardous, as we have already seen; but a woman who loses her caste, loses all that makes life valuable to her; her good name, her reputation, her husband, her children, and the very means of subsistence itself.

Like the English lady, she is unaccustomed to menial work, but unlike her, the Hindoo lady has no resources whatever; she has no education to enable her to teach, and no knowledge of needle-work or the fine arts; so that if she casts off the support afforded by her family, she must either be dependent on Christian charity or starve. Prosonno's grandmother was not prepared for such a sacrifice, though she dared more in his behalf than most would have cared to do.

After well digesting her plan in her own mind, she applied to her son Mohendro for leave to absent herself for one day, on the plea that she wished to visit some distant idol shrine, with offerings to entreat that a new mind might be given to the apostate, in whom they were all so interested.

"But why should you go, mother?" asked Mohendro; 'it is not seemly. Tell me which God

you desire to propitiate, and I will carry your offerings and perform your pooja for you."

"No, no, my son; that will not do," rejoined the mother. "I have had a dream on three successive nights, in which the exact spot has been revealed to me; but the oracle expressly added that it must be kept a profound secret, and that unless the person at whose hands Prosonno first received food in this world were to go, and go alone, to make the offerings, they would be of no avail whatever. Now I am that person; do you not remember how ill the boy's mother was after his birth, and how constantly I fed him with goat's milk from the first day till he was nearly two months old?"

Mohendro remembered it perfectly, and to his mind a belief in superhuman agency seemed natural and necessary. His mother knew well that he had a faith in dreams that no philosophy could ever conquer. Mohendro made some slight show of resistance to his mother's request, but in his heart he thought that as she was an old woman, no great harm could come of her leaving the zenana for a few hours. Besides, owing to the very nature of her errand, she must keep it secret; no

disgrace, therefore, could accrue to him, and thinking thus, he yielded.

The old lady, with all her native shrewdness, took good care to shroud her journey with such superstitious terror and awe, as should prevent any of the family following her in private. Her object was no other than to gain the abode of the same miserable hag who had been visited by Surjo. Following the directions of her little spy, the courageous woman pursued the unaccustomed way, till she entered a dark wood. Here she heard the low growl of the hyena in the thicket, but her heart failed not, for she had a purpose to accomplish. At a sharp turn in the wood, she suddenly encountered the very witch she was seeking. She had never seen her, but judging from the description of the boy, she felt she could not be mistaken. There surely could not be two such hideous creatures in the world; so she determined to pay the wicked woman in her own coin, which was to work upon her superstitious fears, and thus deceive her as she had deceived others.

"I knew I should find you here, daughter of hell," she exclaimed; "so you thought to send

an intoxicating draught to a Christian, did you? and you thought to make him mad? Well, he drank the draught: to him it became the most delicious sherbet; and what is more, it opened his eyes to see you preparing another draught of a more deadly nature. You were gathering the poisonous Datura for that very purpose. Confess that you were. You see, I know it all; he told me, and he told me that the moment Surjo Baboo —I know the name of your employer too, you perceive—should attempt to administer that poison to him, that moment it would be changed into death for you, and you would be struck dead wherever you might be. If you are crossing the river, the flood will drown you; if you are in the wood, the lightning will blast you; if you are asleep in your den, the venomous cobra will bite you."

The wicked sorceress trembled from head to foot. Prosonno's grandmother had boldly drawn her bow at a venture; the arrow had hit home. All that she had said the witch knew was true, and she too exclaimed like the rest—"Then these Christians do use sorceries and enchantments, and I am undone!"

"You deserve to be undone, wretched woman that you are!" said the other, "but I can show you a way of escape. When does Surjo come for your charmed potion?"

"To-morrow night," muttered the hag, humbled in the very dust.

"Well, can you not change that deadly Datura into a strong sleeping draught? You have such things, I suppose?"

"The witch of the Bamboo grove has all things. She has that which will bring life to yon little bird in the cruel talons of that hawk, and she has that which will bring death to the strong man. But what use will a sleeping draught be to you?"

"Presume not to ask questions of one whose fathers were magicians before you were born. Will you change the potion, or will you not? If you do, you save your life, and have one murder less on your polluted conscience."

"But I lose my money," muttered the hag. "Sordid wretch!" retorted Prosonno's grandmother; "how much did Surjo give you?"

"I have received forty rupees, and he has promised me forty more when his brother is dead."

"How much do you suppose this necklace is worth?" asked the old lady, taking a string of pearls from her neck.

"A hundred rupees," suggested the hag, greedily eyeing the costly trinket.

"It cost twice that sum; nevertheless it is yours if you change that poison ere Surjo comes for it to-morrow."

"I will change it."

"Swear by the head of your mother."

"I have sworn."

"Well, then, listen. I want it to be such a sleep as shall wear the semblance of death."

"I will so prepare it."

"How long will the sleep last?"

"Twelve hours at least, unless any great external heat be applied to the body."

"Is that sure to waken the patient?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Good-bye, then; if you deceive me you die. Remember! On the river, in the wood, in your den, nowhere shall you escape me!"

Prosonno's grandmother returned home in safety. Her son Mohendro, was the first to meet her.

"Well, mother, what said the oracle?" he inquired with eagerness.

"It said," replied the shrewd old woman, "that at twelve o'clock to-morrow night Prosonno's sin will be atoned for; you and his mother will embrace him as your son; and his elder brother will carry him in his arms."

"Oh, what happiness!" exclaimed Mohendro; "the gods grant it may be so. But what a strange hour, mother, twelve o'clock at night! Surely if Prosonno consents, we shall hold the feast of atonement in the day-time."

"Strange or not, I cannot help it. I have told you what said the oracle. I do not pretend to interpret revelations," replied the old lady. On the next evening she gave Prosonno his supper sooner than usual, and retired to her room early. As she expected, about nine o'clock she heard Surjo call stealthily, "Thakur-ma, Thakur-ma!" "What is it?" "I wish you would go to my brother and see if he is well, I fear he is not, I heard him breathe so heavily just now: he does not like me; so I will not go in to annoy him."

"Murder!" thought the Thakurma; and while she went she trembled lest any part of her plan

should fail. It was a fearful risk to run; but though she believed now that he carried about with him no charms, at least no charms in the common acceptation of the term, yet she had a vague undefined belief that the same God who fifty years before had saved her, who was not His worshipper, from being the murderer of her own child, could now deliver one of his most devoted servants from a dreadful death. Thus she tried to quiet her fears and still her fluttering heart.

As soon as she entered the room, she saw that the opiate had done its work. If Prosonno were not really dead, the likeness to death was perfect. He was stretched out cold and motionless with glassy half-open eyes, and, so far from breathing heavily, there seemed to be no breath in him. Had the witch deceived her? She could not tell; and the horror of this suggestion gave a reality to her cry of agony, as she shrieked out, "Is my boy ill? Ah! no, he is dead, quite dead; nothing wakens him. Alas, my boy!"

All the family flocked in, and we must do them the justice to say, that their grief was most real and heart-felt. His mother could hardly be restrained from throwing herself on the corpse and

breaking out into the sharp, plaintive wail that is their wont. But as he died an outcast, this was forcibly prevented. The old father's silent agony was even more sad to behold. Chondro and Nobo mourned truly as they looked on that pale, emaciated form that had, till the last few weeks, been their companion in every joy and sorrow; and even Surjo's grief was not all dissimulation when he exclaimed, "Alas, my brother!"

The Brahmins were all in the house, and the eldest brother eagerly inquired of them if atonement might be made for the dead? They answered, "Yes." He knew that before; and so they immediately set about the purifications and the rites connected with that ceremony. They shaved his head; placed beside him a huge heap of cowrie shells, from which all broken and imperfect ones had been carefully excluded; sprinkled them with saffron, and then offered them up to the god Narayan.

After other minor ceremonies had taken place, and numerous incantations had been muttered, the dead body was pronounced clean, and the relatives hastened to take a last look. The father and mother embraced the corpse of their son,

shedding over it bitter tears. The sin he had committed, the grief he had caused them, were all forgotten; he was their child again, their most loved child; they saw and felt nothing beyond. Surjo seemed inexpressibly pained by this scene, and determined to end it by giving the signal to the bearers to lift the light couch on which Prosonno was laid. He did so by taking the corpse up in his arms, and adjusting the funeral garments before carrying it to the river-side to be burned. Just then the clock struck twelve. Prosonno's parents had embraced him as their son, his elder brother had lifted him in his arms; the oracle had spoken truly. Mohendro's eyes met those of his mother. "It is even so, my son," she said. "This, then, is what the oracle meant."

"Alas, who can ward off the decrees of fate!" sighed the old man, while they carried Prosonno's body out of the house, amid the most piercing shrieks and the loudest lamentations. Arrived at the river-side, they placed the lower extremities of the corpse in the sacred tide, with its head resting on Surjo's breast. The Brahmins planted a branch of the tulsee tree beside the body, and then broke out into spells and incantations. This

ceremony was in reality a deception, being one used for a dying, not a dead man; but since dying at home and not by the side of the holy Ganges, involved a serious disgrace, Surjo was anxious to give the passer-by the impression that no such disgrace had fallen to the lot of his family. Besides, as he said, they could not be quite sure but that there might be still some breath left in him; and was it not best to let his erring brother have the benefit of the sin-destroying water of the sacred stream?

Meanwhile the funeral pile was prepared, the wood arranged, new clothes were brought, and then arraying Prosonno in those clothes, Surjo prepared to lay the body on the pile.

But the time for the deliverance was come. The opiate, administered early in the afternoon, had done its work, and Prosonno's life was fast struggling into new activity. The motion of the bearers over rough ground and in deep darkness; the cool air of the early morning; the shock of the water on his feet laid in the stream; even the cries, and shouts, and lamentations, had all tended to produce a change. Prosonno was fast waking from his lethargy; and when Surjo put

on him the dry clean clothes, his consciousness rapidly returned. Before Surjo had time to lift him from the cot, and get the light which should kindle the pile, Prosonno started to his feet, and with a loud cry seized him by the throat. Surjo had all along been in an excited state: even his dead conscience had begun to upbraid him for his murderous work; and now that clutch on his throat, in the black night, by one whom he had murdered, struck him with peculiar horror. It seemed as if his own hour of doom had come, and as though he was already fixed to that wheel of the eternal world, whose rotations eternity alone can number.

"Hell opens its mouth for me. Hell's king holds me fast. Oh! let me go!" shrieked the terrified man; and disengaging himself with a violent effort from his brother's grasp, he fled from the place, a raving maniac. There was great confusion, and then the rest fled after him, terrified likewise, but scarcely knowing, in the darkness, what had happened.

Thus Prosonno found himself alone. He felt very much confused: he saw spectre forms running from the spot, and heard those terrific

shrieks; but the river, and the bank, and the pile even dimly seen, told him where he was. Gradually his shattered nerves gained strength; his eyes took in the scene more clearly; and he started up to a partial consciousness of what had brought him there. He thought he was going to be burnt alive; that the grim spectres he had seen were Surjo and the rest, who had disappeared in the wood; but they would soon be back; or perhaps they had been pursued, else why those dismal shrieks?

However that might be, escape from his persecutors was the one hope that now filled his mind; and he saw plainly that to secure his liberty he must speedily cross the river. Only a few miles away on the other bank lived a native missionary, whose name he knew; and it could not be difficult to reach his house before sunrise. He therefore pushed his way along the bank; and growing stronger by the effort, at length ventured, by wading and swimming, to cross the stream at one of its well-known shallows. Through God's help he reached the bank in safety, exhausted but safe.

How can we describe the joy of his heart when

he found his feet once more upon firm ground! A two hours' walk would bring him to the home of the missionary: he knew that; but the state of ferment in which his thoughts had been so long kept, demanded a brief repose; and throwing himself beneath the shelter of a peepul tree, he continued for some time in a sort of vague, waking dream; sometimes passing in review the scenes of that night's tragedy, and sometimes, with his eyes fixed in drowsy vacancy, receiving passively the impressions of the bright scenery around.

The morning was now in its first freshness, and the day was breaking over the waking earth. The banks of the river were luxuriantly wooded; and under the tufts of the light and towering palm were seen the acacia and the citron interlacing their boughs; while here and there a rustling peepul tree thickened the shade. The gay golden-winged birds that haunt those shores were in every direction skimming along the water, and the activity of the morning hour was visible everywhere. Flights of doves and lapwings were fluttering among the leaves; and the white paddy bird, which had been roosting

all night in some date tree, now stood sunning its wings on the green bank, or floated like living silver over the flood. The flowers, too, both of land and water, looked all freshly awakened; and as the noble young man gazed and gazed, the flower of Hope too once more budded in his bosom. He was too happy to move or speak, for he had tested by experience the truth of that glorious promise, "FEAR NOT; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. FEAR NCT, for I am with thee."

CHAPTER VI.

SABBATH evening had come again. It was exactly four weeks since Prosonno had been carried off by his heathen relatives on his way to the place of baptism. He had traversed that way safely this time, and now he stood boldly forward before a large Christian congregation to receive the sacred rite. His friend Rám Doyal had spoken truth when he said, "Let us do what the church did for Peter, pray for him unceasingly; and he will be delivered safe to us again, for he belongs to that flock of whom it is written 'not one of them shall perish.'"

"What think you of Christ?" was the first question put to the young candidate, who stood there waiting to receive the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace that had already been bestowed on him.

"This is what I think," exclaimed the young

man, his whole countenance lighted up with holy joy, while his closely-shaven head, and pale emaciated form, betokened the persecuted sufferer that he had been; "this is what I think. It is said in one of our sacred writings, that one night the full moon shone out in all her splendor; the stars were dazzling in their brilliancy, and every mountain was in a blaze; the three combined their strength of light to turn the night into day. But all was in vain; it was night still, until the SUN rose. I think and I know Christ to be that Sun. He is the Sun of Righteousness. Until He rose in my heart, nothing else could ever dispel the darkness that reigned in it; but He has arisen, and now the blackness and the mists are gone; and I can see clearly that heavenly country, which through faith in Him alone shall one day be my glorious inheritance."

The missionary went on: "You said that through faith in Christ, you expect salvation or life eternal in heaven, how so?"

"Because Jesus Christ is God, and was once, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, incarnate as man. In that form he obeyed the righteous law of God, and finally suffered as a sinner, though

he was Himself no sinner; but suffered for us, not for Himself. This substitution God has accepted, and I humbly accept it too. I place faith in the sacrifice that has been offered; thus, having had my transgressions blotted out, I hope for the promise of life eternal."

"Could you not in any way have saved yourself?"

"No; since the fall of our first parents, man's nature has become so corrupt, and his works, thoughts, and words are so utterly evil, that I feel that I could not, by any endeavor of my own, have freed myself from the sin of my nature, or have kept the law of God."

"Did Hindooism, the religion you are quitting, speak to you of no atonement for sin, or way of pardon for the transgressor?"

"Hindooism is a religion of impurity, lies, and imposture. The only atonement it teaches is performed by puerile, outward acts, which cannot by any means satisfy God's offended law."

"In professing yourself a Christian, as you are now about to do, by what rule do you intend to regulate your life?"

For the first time Prosonno hesitated. He

looked back on the painful history of the last few weeks, and asked himself by what rule he had regulated his actions. He could not tell. There was no parallel case to his in the Bible; or if there was, he was not sufficiently acquainted with the Bible to know. Then why not have listened to his father's entreaties, and yielded to his mother's tears? Why? Because he could not; he loved Christ. But this was no answer to make before such an assembly; the minister had asked for his rule of life; what should he say? The poor young man became nervous, confused, all but unable to speak; at length he stammered out:—

"I do not know the rules yet; but I love Christ with all my heart, and strength, and mind. Oh, do not say that I may not be baptized to-night. I have waited so long, I shall learn the rules hereafter."

"There are no more rules to learn, Prosonno, after you have learned the grand rule of love. Hold that fast, and you will endure to the end." Then followed the baptism. The Hindoos foolishly believe this rite to consist in a charm being whispered in the ear, and a small quantity of beef and wine being put into the mouth of the

candidate. How different was the holy ceremony by which the young soldier was duly sworn "with true and fearless mind to serve the Virgin-born."

He stepped forward, took off the Brahminical thread, and laying it on the table he received a Bible instead, in token that he renounced Brahminism, with all its honors and social privileges, and chose rather to become a follower of the meek and lowly Nazarene. A few calm words of faith and prayer were said, and then he was imprest with the sign and seal which Christ himself appointed—baptism with water. By faith he recognized that water baptism as a token before men that he had put on Christ; and an emblem of his soul's being washed in that blood which cleanseth from all sin.

When Prosonno returned home with the missionary, he was introduced to his new abode. It consisted of one room in a long barrack-like building, where he found eight or nine young men similarly situated with himself. Most missionary stations near Calcutta have such buildings, in which to accommodate their young converts while they lead a student's life, and till they

obtain employment. Prosonno had expressed a strong desire to study for the ministry. His natural qualifications, his piety, and the knowledge of all he had suffered for Christ, rendered this wish highly gratifying to his Christian friends; he was accordingly installed in the above-named barrack, and admitted into the Missionary Institution of that place as a theological student. Here he enjoyed the pleasures of Christian society, the benefit of religious instruction, and above all, the peace that comes with the consciousness that self has been sacrificed and duty has been done.

But that it was a life of privation to Prosonno, it would be useless to deny. To take only the matter of pecuniary means. During the whole time that he attended the classes at the Presidency College of Calcutta, his mother was accustomed daily to tie a half rupee * in the corner of his chudder or mantle, which money he daily spent on his lunch, the only meal he partook of away from home. Now, a half rupee a day was the entire sum the missionaries could afford him from the public funds intrusted to their care; breakfast,

* The Rupee is about equal to a silver half dollar

dinner, clothes—all had to come out of that little sum. As for lunch; he learned to do without that luxury altogether. Then, again, his food was no longer prepared by the skillful and loving hands of a mother or a wife, with all the condiments and spices, a judicious use of which is the pride of Hindoo ladies. It was cooked by a poor Christian widow, who acted as servant to all the Baboos who were living in the barrack. They, from a longer residence among Europeans, had become accustomed to have their food seasoned with onions, to eat fowl, and some of them even went so far as to take other meats occasionally. Now, to Prosonno these things were abhorrent in the extreme. It was as though an Englishman had been asked to eat the flesh of the horse, or things vastly more repulsive. For many months all enjoyment of his food was at an end. He dined from duty and necessity, rather than from any sense of gratification to the palate.

But there was another trial, in comparison with which, what has already been noted faded into very nothingness. This was "the shadow of his departed home," the home he had known before the pain of reserve had come between him and the

hearts of those he loved best on earth. For, strangely enough, at the twilight hour, the harshness and unkindness of the last few weeks would be all forgotten, and then Prosonno would catch himself listening for the tones of each household voice. His Christian friends were most kind, but they and their ways were strange to him, and he felt at times a yearning anguish to behold his own again. Christian families lived around him happy and prosperous. Some young men, who like himself had come out of heathenism, had since been joined by their wives. Others had married women from the Christian community that was fast increasing at the missionary station. To such, the palm's low rustling leaves seemed as glad music, intermingling with their wives' sweet voices, and their children's laughing play; but to poor Prosonno it brought other thoughts. His eye grew dim, while he tremblingly recalled the bitter hatred which Kaminee had evinced to the religion he had embraced. Beautiful, loved, and loving as she was, he feared that his wife would never be his own again. No laughing children would wile away the hours for him. He would never, at the morning hour or at the sunset's

light, hear again his mother's voice; there was no more a father's blessing for him, or a brother's love, or a sister's endearments; these were the thoughts that filled his spirit, and no wonder

"If they waked a wish
To turn aside and weep."

But he was not always thus sad. In a few weeks Prosonno became more accustomed to his new mode of life, and then he began to see how superior was the conduct that was regulated by Christian principles, to that which had Hindooism only for its guide. One thing particularly struck him, that it was by raising the standard of female character that Christians had chiefly improved the ground-work of their society. The native converts who had embraced Christianity a few years before had already educated their wives, as far as they were able, and already the happy fruits of this training began to appear in all the domestic arrangements, which so deeply affect the interests of man. Their wives, though they still retained much of their native shyness and reserve, and continued, as was their custom, to perform all those household duties for their husbands which are the proper sphere of a woman in every land,

were treated by those husbands in a manner very different from that to which they had been accustomed in their Hindoo homes. The men now felt that their wives were no longer ignorant and uneducated, and consequently treated them with respect. Formerly they had no religious principles to guide them; now many of them were under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and therefore were not suspected. They sat down to meals together; and if a male friend came in, it was no longer incumbent on the wife to run and hide herself.

But it was not until Prosonno came in contact with English ladies, and was admitted into the inner recesses of an English household, that he learned how full and unsuspecting was the trust reposed in woman, and how richly she deserved such confidence. About a fortnight had elapsed after his baptism, when Prosonno was asked one evening to go and drink tea with the missionary. His new clothes had come home that day, so he thought it a fitting occasion to put them on, for he knew he would be in the society of a lady. These clothes were not made in the European fashion, as is supposed by most Hindoos, but con-

sisted of a tight-fitting long coat (termed chap-khan), and trowsers, such as are worn already in the country by Mohammedan gentlemen. As Prosonno put off his two thin muslin wrappers, which, till now, had constituted his sole dress, and put on the new clothes, made of thick close calico, he could not but be struck, even in this trifling circumstance, with the strength that female influence exerted the moment a man came under its power; and his thoughts assumed a shape like this—"If we, Hindoo men, were accustomed to meet our ladies in society, we should soon be compelled to do away with our effeminate muslins, and adopt a decent costume like this. While they, on the other hand, if they associated with us, would, as an immediate consequence, make a change most desirable, in the single garment they now wear." And Prosonno's thoughts were true and just. The missionary and his wife had intended to be alone, on this first evening of entertaining their young convert; but, as it happened, two gentlemen dropped in unasked, and the missionary was obliged to enter into conversation with them, so that Prosonno talked chiefly with the lady.

The husband and wife both met him on the stairs, and led him into the room that he might feel himself perfectly at home. This was not easy, the scene was so new and strange to him. He was ushered into a neat, brightly-lighted apartment. At the table in the middle of the room were seated the two gentlemen already named. Prosonno was motioned into a chair, and then the host and hostess also took their seats, making a snug, cosy party round the tea-table. This evening meal of tea among the English strikes the Hindoo as a new and strange thing. They have nothing like it among themselves. Their meals are never social; they usually eat separately; each wife, not sitting beside her husband, but standing behind him to serve him; the business of the hour is to eat, and they do nothing else.

The conversation flowed freely, and gave rise to an animated discussion, on how far the natural features of a country are capable of influencing the moral and intellectual nature of its inhabitants. It seemed to Prosonno that the lady was inclined to give undue prominence to such an influence; while the man of science repudiated

the notion altogether, maintaining that it was entirely a matter of race, and that a Bengalee reared amid the eternal snows of the Alps, would remain a Bengalee still. They could not settle it, so they turned to other subjects. From the natural features of Swiss scenery, to the politics of Italy, was an easy transition, and the host and his European guests began to discuss them with much warmth; while the missionary's wife, who knew that Prosonno could not have seen an English newspaper while he was in confinement, and would probably, therefore, be little acquainted with the matter, took him on one side, to draw him out on the manners and customs of his own people. This was a subject which it was her great desire to sift to the very bottom; for she knew well, that without an intimate knowledge of the people among whom one labors, there is but small chance of doing them good.

Leaving her husband to entertain his guests, his lady asked Prosonno what most forcibly struck him among Christians as new and strange. He replied, as all new converts would be sure to do:—

"The ladies, madam, most decidedly."

"An equivocal compliment, at best!" returned the lady, laughing. "Well, and what is your verdict on these new and strange articles?"

"To tell you the truth, madam, they puzzle me. Our ladies are not wanting in beauty and sweetness, and even in intelligence; and yet they are as different from English women, as is the jungly marigold from the garden rose."

"And surely the difference in both cases arises from the same cause, Baboo—namely, the want of culture. Now tell me, what are the surroundings of your women while they are yet children? Is there aught in their early education to lead their minds to what is true and elevated?"

"Alas, no!" replied Prosonno. "A little girl among us is supposed to have no religion at all. Religion is not thought to be a child's matter. The first text, or montro, is whispered into her ear when she is about fourteen. Till then she is allowed to grow up in utter ignorance of the nature of a prayer; that is, at least, if we except one trifling religious ceremony, which has more evil in it than good."

"And what is that?" asked the lady.

"I hardly like to tell you, madam; it is so

utterly foolish; and yet, as you say, this want of training and evil training combined, account for so much that is wrong in Hindoo females, that perhaps it is but fair that they should get the benefit of the excuse. The ceremony is this: The little girl is taught to dig a tiny toy-pond in the garden, to stick a branch of the Bel tree in the middle, and then to worship the goddess Lilabotee in words something like these:—

"'At holy tank with holy flower,
Who comes to pray this mid-day hour?
'Tis I! O Lilabotee, hear!
And save thy child the burning tear,
Which e'en must fall, should one be brought
To share my lord's love. Curse the thought!
And curse all co-wives! One more boon,
Make me a joyful mother soon.'"

"And do you mean to say," asked the lady, "that that is all the religion a girl is ever taught? Surely it cannot be!"

"Yes indeed, madam, I am ashamed to say that is all. I suppose the training of a little girl in England is something very different."

"Different! Yes," said the wife of the missionary, while her eyes filled with tears at the remembrance of her childhood's home, and of the

father and mother she was never more to see: for it was at once her joy and her sorrow to be the "child of parents passed into the skies." Prosonno saw her emotion, and rightly judged that, now that her mind had travelled back to those days, she would be pleased to dwell on them. Besides, he really wished to learn the early history of an English woman; so he further inquired, "How is it different, madam? How are female children educated among you?"

"Well, Baboo," replied the lady, looking quite interested now, "I have had little to do with the education of English children, having none of my own, as you know: and since my arrival in India, it has been nothing but Bengalee schools and Zenana teaching, Zenana teaching and Bengalee schools. But I will tell you about my own childhood, if you like. My first recollections stretch back to the time when I was four years of age; and almost the first thing I can recall is going on a party of pleasure, with a great many ladies and gentlemen, to walk through a beautiful park. In vain did I try with my little feet to keep up with the rest; I was always falling back. At one time my shoes would be full of stones; at

another my progress would be impeded by my tiny frock catching in the rose bushes; till a minister in the party (our Gooroo,* Baboo, you understand), came to me and said, 'You cannot walk with the others, my child: I see that plainly; come with me across the soft grass; we will reach the place where we are going to dine, as quickly as they will, though you take ever such tiny steps.'

"And then he took me by the hand and led me on, he and I alone. Baby as I was, I knew it was an act of self-denial; so I looked up in his face, and said, 'Why do you come with me, when you were talking so nicely to papa; I am sure you are sorry to come.'

"He answered, 'No, not at all sorry, my little girl; I am very glad; and you too will learn, as you grow older, that there is no happiness like that which comes from trying to help others.' This lesson was the first I remember from a Gooroo, and I never forgot it."

"Happy the child who has such recollections of a Gooroo!" exclaimed Prosonno. "With us the advent of a Gooroo is too often the sign for the father to frown; for the little children to run and

* Goo oo, religious teacher.

hide themselves; and for the mother to look anxious and fidgety; for well she knows that the teacher has come only for money and presents; and that, whether she has them or not, they must be forthcoming, nevertheless But will you kindly proceed?"

"I was about to tell you," said the lady, "that I was born in England, where females are more independent than even our own country-women are in this land. Here the warm climate keeps us prisoners; and I fancy we have also unknowingly imbibed some of our neighbor's false notions about female delicacy and female reserve. But there, as the little song has it, 'Birds are free, so are we; and we live as happily.' Though we lived in the great city of London, with its thronged squares and public thoroughfares, you might have seen my mother, who was a very beautiful woman, each Sabbath morning leading my sister and myself by the hand to our place of worship, through the most crowded streets; while no person dared to address us or molest us in any way."

"And then the teachings we received in that place of worship, how pure and holy they were! And the prayers we heard, how different from the

one you have told me! Instead of heaping curses on our fellow-creatures, we were taught to embrace all in the arms of love. And as for praying that we might become mothers! I don't think that sort of thing ever enters the head of English children. The love of their parents, together with their books, and work, and play, fills all their thoughts and bounds all their wishes."

"And the poor little Bengalee child," exclaimed Prosonno, "has her mind filled with notions of marriage and nonsense like that from her very infancy, and that by her own mother! It was but yesterday I heard the Catechist's wife teaching her infant of a year old to imitate the sounds made by animals; that was well; but a Hindoo mother would have said instead, 'Baby, show me how you will cry when your husband comes to take you home;' or 'Baby, show me the little ears in which you will put the rings your husband will give you;' and Baby goes through the pantomime, while her mind expands into unhealthy womanhood, before she can barely be called a child! Oh it is sad, very sad!"

"Yes, English mothers would never talk in that way," said the lady; "but then you see they

are educated, and have something else to talk about; whereas a Hindoo mother has nothing. We must always remember that ere we condemn them. Now I learnt almost all I know from my mother; for I was not sent to school, except for two years, and that was when she and my father had to go over to America."

"But how is it that English ladies get time to educate their children?" asked Prosonno. "Do they, then, do no household work at all?"

"Oh! yes, they do a great deal," replied the missionary's wife, "excepting ladies in the very highest classes. But there are sixteen waking hours in the day, and it is astonishing how much may be accomplished in them, if judiciously laid out."

Prosonno listened, deeply interested, whilst the daily life of a Christian woman in England was detailed, in its freedom, industry and activity, but he heaved a sad sigh. Oh, how different had been that description from the history of a day in the very best of Hindoo homes, as was his own! There, if he excepted his own studies and those of his brother Nobo, no work whatever was done but what related to the preparation of food, or to

the still greater trivialities of their religion. Indeed, the number of people living together in a Hindoo house, sometimes as many as thirty or forty, seemed to preclude life from being made a serious and earnest thing; so much of it was necessarily spent in idle talk or gossip. And yet Prosonno was not prepared to give up a certain liking for the fashions in which he was brought up. To his mind the plan of living in a house with only one's wife and children, seemed dull work; so he asked the lady, whether it were always as she had described.

"Nearly always," she replied. "A man does not marry until he is able to maintain a separate establishment for his family, and as his wife is not a child, but at least twenty years of age when she marries, she does not need the care of a mother-in-law, and is perhaps better without her."

"But is it right to leave parents in their old age to live all by themselves, while each son cares only for himself and his wife?" inquired Prosonno.

"Well, perhaps not," said the lady; "but such a case seldom occurs. Often there will be one of the daughters who remains unmarried, and she

will continue to live with her parents, and take care of them. Or when a mother is a widow, she often lives with her son."

"There is one thing, ma'am," exclaimed Prosonno, "that I cannot quite understand. Do you mean to say that there are young ladies in England who never marry at all?"

"Numbers of them," replied the wife of the missionary.

"Well, then, surely that is not as it should be?" asked the young man.

"I do not pretend to say that it is," replied the lady; "at the same time it cannot be helped. In England, where no man is allowed more than one wife, and where the emigration of the male part of the community is of such frequent occurrence, there are really not husbands enough for the women."

"That seems very strange to us," returned Prosonno; "I wonder what my good mother would say to facts like these. She would think I had got among an extraordinary people indeed. But it is one of the advantages of mixing with men of other nations and other habits, that we learn that our notions do not rule the entire world, and

more than that, that our own notions are not always the best."

"Exactly so," said the lady; "and besides this, an intimate acquaintance with foreigners often tends to correct harsh and erroneous views we may have formed of them. I, for instance, before I visited in the houses of Hindoo families, used to think that, living as they do, there would be nothing but quarrelling among their inmates from morning till night. But I did not find it was so. Even the wives of the same husband, in spite of all the curses you say they heap on each other, seem happy on the whole."

"Oh, they have dreadful quarrels, sometimes!" returned Prosonno; "but on the whole, as you say, they are happier far than your ladies would be under the same circumstances, I fancy."

Here the conversation was interrupted by the other visitors expressing a wish to take leave, whereupon the missionary, as was his wont, proposed that they should have prayers together before they separated. He read a chapter out of the Holy Book of the Christians, and then, while they all knelt round the table, he offered a prayer, in which each heart must have joined. Not only

were the petitions of such a nature that every man would use them in coming before the Most High God; but there was also something to suit the individual case of each one there. Prosonno thought within himself, "Oh! that my heathen friends could hear prayer like this, and feel its value as I do. They would never more use those stupid charms and incantations of which they hardly understand a word!" When the worship was over, the little party separated. Prosonno did not remember ever having spent so pleasant an evening.

After awhile his dullness and his home-sickness vanished by degrees. He was frequently in the house of the missionary; on two evenings in the week he went for a special lesson on theology, and often visited it at other times. Whenever he went, the missionary's wife always received him kindly, and talked to him so encouragingly about Kaminee, that a faint gleam of hope began to rise in his heart, that one day she too might be a Christian. But the missionary and his wife were English people, and could not entirely sympathize in his every thought and feeling; so, after all, the native converts were his best and most intimate

friends, and new ones were daily added to the number.

There was one thing among the Christians that specially struck Prosonno as right and just; although being a Brahmin, he might have been expected to chafe a little under the new régime. This was the total absence of caste. Hitherto all the lower castes, had considered it an honor to be allowed to taste food prepared for him; his blessing was thought to be the highest privilege; and some had even gone so far as to drink the water in which he had dipped his feet. All this was ended now. He was treated like a man, and being a gentleman in character, education and manners, he was treated like a gentleman also. But this was not on account of his Brahminhood. Had he been educated like his poor brother Surjo, he would have found the lowest Soodras taking their place above him in the social scale. Then, again, there were no distinctions of food in this community. Each man ate what he liked, or abstained from what he disliked.

Prosonno did not learn the lesson of the brotherhood of man in a day. Perhaps he never learnt it so completely as his friend Rám

Doyal, who surprised him greatly one morning, by asking him to be present at his marriage. Prosonno had only lived among the Christians about four months, and had not yet seen a Christian wedding, so he exclaimed in some astonishment—

"You to be married, Rám Doyal! To whom? I do not understand. The daughters of the gentlemen converts of this station seem all little girls; but perhaps you have gone elsewhere to seek a bride?"

"No, she is here," replied Rám Doyal, laughing. "But I expected your aristocratic high mightiness would be offended at my choice; so, though you hold the first place among my friends, you are the last to hear my secret."

"You puzzle me," said Prosonno, "you surely cannot mean to marry ——"

"Marry whom?" asked his friend. "Out with it, I believe you will hit it off exactly."

"Not one of the girls out of the orphan school? No, no, Rám Doyal, that must not be!"

"'Tis even so, however, Prosonno; and if betting were allowed among Christians, I would bet

you ten to one, that in less than three months you will say I have done the right thing."

"But, Rám Doyal, think a moment; what is her caste? They say those girls are the poorest of orphans rescued in some famine. Why, her parents may have been basket-makers, or shoemakers,* for aught you know!"

"I hardly think it, from her sweet face and fair complexion," answered his friend. "But supposing they were as you say, I do not marry the parents, who are dead and gone, but the daughter, who is as good, and as clever, and as pretty as any girl you would wish to see."

"Oh, then I know her!" answered Prosonno. "She is the one who sits first in the second row at church, on the women's side, and they call her Suseela. Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"Well, she is pretty; but fancy a Brahmin marrying nobody knows who. For my part, if God ever gives me my Kaminee! well!—but if not, Protestant monkhood for me! If I am a Christian, that is no reason why I should sully my blood."

* Castes whose very shadow would defile a Brahmin.

"As you please," returned Rám Doyal, shrugging his shoulders. "Now, will your Brahminship condescend to attend the wedding?"

"Yes, indeed; his Brahminship will come; he wants to see the fun. Pray are the Baboos to feast with the bride's school-fellows, on the school-lawn, where they usually dine?"

"No, you provoking fellow. I did think of that, till the bride herself told me that her school-fellows preferred to have their feast apart. You see these basket-makers' daughters have some sense after all; so as they have refused our company, I ask you to a wedding dinner at the chief catechist's, whose wife has kindly undertaken it for me. I cannot promise, however, that all the guests shall be Brahmins. Baboo S. was of the brazier's caste; Baboo G. of the doctor, and Baboo T. only a ——"

"Oh yes, yes, I know that," returned Prosonno. "Still they are educated men and gentlemen; and we as Christians have done with all other distinctions."

"Oh, have we? Only we will not marry a basket-maker! I am truly glad of it, because there is but one Suseela in the world, and I want

her for myself." So saying the happy bridegroom elect went to complete his arrangements with a native confectioner, respecting the quantity of sweetmeats to be furnished for the wedding feast.

On the appointed day, about eleven o'clock in the morning, a large Christian congregation, consisting of men, women, and the girls of the orphan school, about sixty in number, assembled in the little church. When all was ready, the missionary beckoned to Rám Doyal, who was seated among the men, to come and stand before him and the assembled witnesses. At the same moment the missionary's wife led in the bride, and the two stood side by side. She was about sixteen years of age, very modest and pretty, and was attired in a white muslin Saree, which served the purpose of a veil, and under the folds of which a tight-fitting pink silk bodice, trimmed with silver lace, showed to great advantage. Her beautiful long black hair was neatly plaited and fastened up with pins; while Rám Doyal, who was in a good situation, and able to afford the present, not caring to be wiser than the inspired writer, who asks, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" had bought his bride a few gold

jewels also, after the fashion of the country. She wore them now for the first time, and they suited her well, and heightened the effect produced by her native beauty. The bridegroom himself wore his usual costume, with the addition of only a Cashmere shawl thrown over his shoulders, the gift of a heathen uncle, who, lately pacified towards him, had taken this fitting opportunity of showing his kind feeling.

The marriage service was very simple. It consisted in the missionary asking the bride and bridegroom in their native language whether, in the presence of God and of those witnesses, they took each other for their lawful and only partner through life, to have and to hold until death parted them. They both joined hands, and answered, "We do." Then he pronounced them man and wife, and said, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." After that a marriage hymn was sung, and then the missionary commended the newly-wedded pair to the keeping and the blessing of God. Last of all, they signed a contract, containing promises similar to those already made in words, and then the marriage was complete.

Prosonno contrasted this chaste and holy service with the disgusting proceedings that had taken place on the day on which he had brought home his wife from the house of her father: and the contrast tended to heighten his admiration of Christianity, that chosen religion in which he daily saw something new to love and respect. As the bride and the bridegroom were going out of church to the house of the catechist, where the feast was to be held, Prosonno whispered to his next neighbor—

"Of course, as the bride is already a woman, there will be no second-marriage ceremony needed in a year or two, as is the custom among us?"

"Oh no, certainly not," was the reply. "You know the cottage that Rám Doyal has lately taken and furnished? Well, thither he and his wife will repair as soon as the feast is over. What need will there be of another ceremony?"

"Oh! I see none at all. But will they live alone? Can the bride be trusted by herself, all the time her husband is at office?"

"Live alone! Yes, of course. Rám Doyal's relatives are all Hindoos. With whom should he live? And as for the bride, you had better not

let her husband hear that question of yours, if you wish to keep friends with him; that's all."

"But I thought—I thought," said Prosonno, blushing, and hardly knowing how to get out of the dilemma, "I thought she would be too inexperienced to get on well alone. There are dozens of things our wives have to learn from their mothers-in-law, as you know very well. Fancy our little brides being set down alone in a great empty house the day they were married! Why it would be the death of them!"

"Perhaps; but that would be just because they are so little. There is some difference, you must allow, between a young woman of sixteen and a child of eight."

"Well, yes; I was forgetting that," returned Prosonno. "But do none of the native Christian girls marry till they reach this age?"

"Hardly any, and some are older; and as for English young ladies, I dare say our missionary's wife has told you, they often do not marry until they are twenty-five or thirty years old."

The wedding feast went off remarkably well. There were some four and twenty native gentlemen guests, who dined in the verandah off China

plates, it is true, but still preserving the Bengalee custom of sitting cross-legged on the floor, and eating with their fingers in preference to knives and forks Their ladies were to take their dinner in an inner apartment. The viands consisted of rice, and six or seven varieties of curry, made of meat, fish, and vegetables; they had nothing roasted or boiled. The above was their first course; while the second was made up of curds, milk, and sweetmeats.

It may seem strange to our readers that Christian converts, such as these, had not yet learned the European fashion of men and women sitting at meat together. Such must remember that the converts were in a transition state; they had cast off their old religion; but they were not prepared all at once to cast off every social usage that they had followed ever since they had possessed conscious being. By degrees they would do so. The husbands had already begun to eat with their own wives, when in the privacy of their homes; but at a large party, men and women were still shy of mingling together in social intercourse, such as would have been unheard of in their native state.

The dinner for the ladies was to be served

about half an hour later than that of their husbands, to allow time to the catechist's wife (who was directress of the whole) to see that they were both properly attended to; she herself, kind creature, never attempting to sit down at all; she could easily have something special for supper, she said, when all the rest were gone. At length it was ready, when lo! the bride was nowhere to be found. It was not difficult, however, to conjecture where she must have gone; and one of the female guests immediately set out for the orphan school, which was but a little way off, remarking as she went, "To eat off a plantain leaf with those one loves, is sweeter than to feast off the golden dish of a stranger," thus thinks the bride, I fancy. Her proverb was literally verified for she found Suseela in the midst of her school-companions, who were dining on the lawn, each girl being furnished with a plantain leaf for a plate. They had done wisely in asking to be left to themselves. Both parties were the more comfortable for it, and theirs was the merrier party of the two. The bride had not dined with them; she had merely been there to watch their enjoyment; that was natural. She now put on a very

matronly, dignified air, and followed the woman who had come for her; that was natural too.

A few hours later found her alone with her husband in their neat cottage home.

"Shall we kneel down, my Suseela, and ask that this house may become a temple in which God shall deign to dwell with us?" he said.

"Do so," was Suseela's reply. "Ask Him to live with us here, until we are ready to go to Him, and inhabit the mansions that His love has prepared for us." And then they knelt down, those travelers together to that distant land, and asked for blessings on that sweet home-nest that God had given them to sojourn in for a while. Earnestly did they pray that it might be flooded with light, and joy, and melody; and be "a shadow faint, yet in its lines complete," of that better home of promised beauty, which had been purchased for them by the peerless LOVE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER VII.

IT is time to turn once more to Prosonno's heathen home, and see what scenes were being enacted there. The horror and consternation that filled most minds at the recital of the terrible scene that had taken place on the river's bank, may be better imagined than described. Almost the first question that arose was, whether Kaminee ought to divest herself of her ornaments, and begin the austerities of a state of widowhood. The grandmother decided it. Kaminee was not a widow. "As surely," she said, "as the sun would rise when that dreadful night should be passed, so surely would Kaminee's husband be given back to her one day. And Kaminee believed her; for had not the magician promised him to her longing heart? Those thirty-three days were not yet passed. Alas, poor child! All hope from that source was doomed to disappointment. The magician she never saw again; and if

ever her husband should be brought back to her, it would be through no divinations of his.

The family were horribly shocked at Surjo's miserable condition. Had they been acquainted with the full extent of his guilt, their feelings would have partaken more of indignation than of pity; but the grandmother, the only person who could have told the truth, thought it wiser to hold her peace. So the tide of the family prejudice turned against the innocent and unconscious Prosonno; while they all agreed that it was utterly impossible to harm a Christian or turn him from the error of his way; the devil, they said, helped his own. The Hindoos have an unconquerable dislike to hospitals, alms-houses, or asylums of any kind. Thus it happened that although Surjo's madness assumed at times a violent character, and in reality needed skillful treatment, it never occurred to them to place him under restraint beyond such as they were able to contrive for him within the family home. At first they thought even this was cruel, and it was not until he had struck his own mother, and attempted to throw his infant daughter out of the window, that they gave orders for his confinement;

and where should his cell be? There was no room in the house so secure as that in which Prosonno had been placed; indeed, no other room was in the least secure. So Surjo was locked up in the very place that he had bolted and barred and nailed with his own hands for his Christian brother.

His madness did not always assume a violent form. He would crouch down in a dark corner with his glaring eyes fixed on the wall, and mutter curses and incantations, and sometimes seem to be talking to some one who was not visible to the eyes of his family. He was put under the charge of one of the servants, who remained with him, gave him his food at regular hours, and attended to the lighting of his room at night; for the wretched man could not bear to be left in darkness. His father and brothers at first would often go to see him; but he rarely recognized them; and it became such a painful duty, that after a while they gave it up.

Mohendro himself was most anxious to go on a pilgrimage, and was only dissuaded from doing so by the earnest entreaties of his mother, who asked him if he could leave his eldest son in such a

miserable condition, and his mother and wife in his brother's house? The old man, however, endeavored in some slight measure to atone for the family sins of the last six months, by performing his poojas with greater strictness than he had ever done. Prosonno, the cause of all the evil, was never mentioned in the family. They had heard of his baptism with indifference, and not a word was said about reclaiming him again. "He had been the root of all this sorrow and disgrace," Mohendro said; "why should they grieve to get rid of him? He was their son no longer, but an outcast, a dog, a Christian!"

The women all this time had been living quietly on, each performing her household work and giving the spare time to sleeping or thinking. Shoudaminee and Nistarinee slept nearly all day long; Shoudaminee, to forget her cares: and Nistarinee, to drown the dullness; for she loved excitement, and half regretted that it was over. She forgot that she had suffered nothing in the matter; while Shoudaminee and Kaminee felt that their pleasant prospects in life were ruined. Kaminee would sit for hours in her own room, going over in her mind the events that had occurred since

the morning that Prosonno first left his home. It seemed so long to her, and she was afraid she should never see him again. The long-wished-for thirty-third day was over; the magician had not appeared, and she was fast giving herself up to despair. She clung to Hindooism, and yet longed to know more about the new religion that her husband professed. "Ah!" she thought, "there is no end to my trouble: would that I had never been born!"

The old grandmother also reflected much on what had lately passed in the family, but in a very different way from Kaminee. Her mind dwelt most on Prosonno's calm trust in the God he worshipped; and his faith that that God would in the end deliver him from his enemies. And then she thought of Surjo's wicked schemes, and how they had all been frustrated; how Prosonno had got safe to the missionary; and how Surjo was lying chained in the room he had prepared for his brother. "Surely," she thought, "Prosonno's God must be the true God." She took great care of the Testament that the missionary had given her so long ago, and often longed to read it, and learn more about the religion of the Christians;

but she could not read herself, and she was afraid to ask any of the servants to read it to her, lest fresh suspicion should be awakened. She had to be content with thinking on these things, and hiding them in her heart.

Things went on in this way for some little while; but the family peace was soon again to be disturbed by another unexpected event.

One night, about two months after the tragedy on the river's bank, the servant who had charge of Surjo was awaked by a piercing scream proceeding from the room in which Surjo was locked. He had gone in himself, an hour before, and left the miserable man asleep. Surjo had been much more tractable lately, and had begun to show signs of returning reason; indeed, his father was entertaining the hope that he would soon be quite restored. The man, knowing this, was all the more surprised, and being very superstitious also, thought some evil spirit was with him. Without a moment's thought he rushed away, taking the key of the door with him; for the screams were becoming louder and louder, and he was thoroughly frightened. Soon the whole family were at the door, calling in vain to the keeper for the

key. It took several minutes to break through the numerous bars on the outside, and when the door went back with a crash, they saw the wretched Surjo biting his chains, tearing his hair, and raving, for he was surrounded with flame.

At first they were too stunned to think of the cause; but Chondro Kumar soon gave the order to bring water, which they threw over the miserable man. This seemed only to increase his agony; and when the fire was quenched, and Mohendro and his sons went to see the condition in which Surjo was left, they found him on the ground—dead. All kinds of restoratives were employed, but in vain. Surjo had gone to hear the terrible sentence from the righteous Judge, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." The little oil-lamp had fallen from its niche in the wall on Surjo while he was sleeping, and had set fire to the thin muslin dress that he wore. So the light which Surjo could not bear to be without, proved the cause of his death.

The family were far more shocked than in Prosonno's case; and the old grandmother pondered long over Surjo's end. She made Nobo write and tell Prosonno; and tried to cheer Shoudaminee's



Surjo's sad fate.

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drooping spirit; for she was looking forward with great dread to the life of hardship before her, as a widow.

The funeral ceremonies were very strictly attended to; the father was determined to think of him only as the religious Hindoo, and seemed to forget the last two months of his life. If they would cross his mind unpleasantly, the fault was laid on Prosonno, and Surjo was called the victim of his brother's anger and spite.

When the feast which concludes the funeral rites was over, Mohendro told his family that they had better return home. They all readily agreed; for they said they had been living on their brother's hospitality long enough; and they would be delighted to go away from the scene of so much trouble. So they returned to the old house, which was half a mile from the missionary station where Prosonno lived.

Grief in Bengalee households, though very violent at first, is soon forgotten. In a few weeks the life in Mohendro's family quite regained its usual spirit, and a stranger would scarcely have imagined that they had recently passed through so much sorrow. At length Mohendro determined

to carry out his wish of making a pilgrimage to Benares,* to offer atonement for Prosonno's sin in becoming a Christian, and to wash out the stain on the good name of the family. His mother and wife both tried to dissuade him from his purpose; but he had decided, and would not listen to them. "I am growing an old man," he said; "and if I delay, I shall never be able to go. I long to see the holy city, and it is time that Chondro and Nobo Kumar should learn to be the head of this house, as Surjo is dead, and I shall soon follow him." The day of his departure was a sorrowful one for the family. Mohendro blessed them in the name of the gods, and gave his sons instructions about the management of the household. They parted from him with much weeping. Chondro and Nobo accompanied him to the opposite side of the Ganges, and saw him fairly begin his journey. Both the brothers agreed that Prosonno was a most hard-hearted wretch to have caused this separation, which almost broke his father's heart. A fortnight after, Nobo Kumar

* Benares, or Kasee, the Golden City, is a place esteemed most holy; on the Ganges, four hundred and sixty miles above Calcutta.

received the following letter, which gave great joy to the whole household:—

"I, Mohendro Kumar Chatterjea, am always blessing you, and in my daily worship to the father Siva, am begging for your prosperity and success. I hope you and all the other members of the family are quite well in body and mind. O my dear son Nobo Kumar, though I am at Benares, and enjoying the pilgrimage in every way, my spirit is with you in Calcutta. If ever you should be sick (which I do not wish) send for my friend Dr. Komol Dutt, and tell him that your father will not mind the expense if he treat you well; and he must send the bill to me, and I will pay it at once. Nobo, my son, I hope you have borne in mind all the counsels that I gave you before my starting for Benares. I shall repeat them again, that you may keep them the better in mind. Never walk in the sun. If you wish to go out anywhere, order the Sirkar to get you a garie or palkee.* Never quarrel with anybody, especially with your college friends. Don't get into bad company. Speak pleasant words to the servants; never be harsh or rough with them; for

* Carriage or palankeen.

it is written in our Shastres that subjects and servants ought to be treated like sons and daughters.

"Do not sit up at night to study; go to bed soon after eleven. Ah, my dear boy do not read that fascinating book, the Bible; do not read any Christian books or associate with Christians, and especially with that apostate for whom I have left HOME, FAMILY, FRIENDS, and COUNTRY.

"Write me letters as often as you can, and mention in them everything respecting home and yourself. Go to Kalighat* once a month. Repeat your *Shondhya* every morning and evening. Be humble and forbearing; do not get angry suddenly, nor be hasty in anything. If you go out anywhere, always pray first to the goddess Kali, who will bless you and make you prosperous. Remember, my son Nobo, that the above counsels are from a father who is to you a god; so make a garland of them, and wear it round the neck of your mind, and act accordingly.

"Where is the apostate? Does he ever write to you? If he does, never reply. Has the Padré given him any situation? How is he supporting

* To the temple of the hideous Kali. Calcutta is a corruption of Kalighat.

himself now? Has he received a Sahib's name? Keep up no connection with him; forget that he is my son and your brother. He has now become an outcast by receiving baptism; and he has no right to give out to the world that he is my son. Pluck him out of your mind, and think that he is dead. By the advice of the Bhottacharias here, I am about to perform a Sraddha* for him who is now dead to me.

"How is that neighbor of mine, who has troubled me in the magistrate's court for the last six years? If he try to do anything again, let me know at once; and tell him that though I am at Benares, I am still living, and it will not take more than five days to go down to Calcutta. Never be afraid of him, my son; he is as great a coward as a woman; and always, like women, his talking is everything; in his speech he can conquer all the kings of the world, kill the bravest soldiers, and destroy the finest countries; but that is all and nothing more; so do not be afraid of him, my son.

"Now I wish to close my letter, as I am going to see the father Siva in company with my Bhot-

* Funeral service.

tacharia, who is waiting for me; but for the sake of the promise made to you before I left, I shall give you a brief account of this holy place. On my reaching Benares I almost lost myself, thinking that I had entered into heaven. Oh! how beautiful is this city. It is adorned with numerous temples of various shapes, and is crowded with people of every clime, color, and country. Some of these holy pilgrims who have the good luck of living in this holy place, always sit around the father Mahadeo,* and worship him continually, while others loudly repeat the father's name, that is *Bom, Bom, Mahadeo.* Pilgrims come in thousands to bathe in the river Ganges, the deliverer of the fallen, every day repeating the words, HORIBOL, HORIBOL, BOM MAHADEO. Rich pilgrims expend thousands of rupees in giving food and raiment to the holy Brahmins and the poor. Truly, Nobo, this is a holy place. Truly the god Mahadeo resides here. Happy are they who can afford to spend their lives in this place by seeing and worshipping the father Siva every day. We are all enjoying good health by the mercy of the father Mahadeo. I bless you

* Mahadeo, Mighty God, Siva.

heartily, my son, Nobo. I hope the father Siva will bless you in all your engagements, and make you happy forever and forever. Report the contents of this letter to my friends."

All Mohendro's letters were in this style, and his sons answered them regularly. For the next three months, life in Prosonno's family went on rather monotonously. Except to go to college, or to visit a friend, Chondro and Nobo scarcely left the house. Their old friends had never got over the feeling that there was terrible disgrace on the family name, and were not nearly as warm as they used to be. The young men sometimes felt a wish, to see Prosonno, for their anger disappeared with time; but they were afraid of incurring their father's displeasure, and it never came to anything. The old grandmother was growing more aged every day; she often longed to see her favorite boy again; but Mohendro had exacted the promise that none of the women should leave the house while he was away.

All this time Shoudaminee was experiencing the hardships of widowhood. It seemed doubly hard for her; for being the *Boro Bo*, that is, the wife of the eldest son, she had been treated with

even greater consideration than the others. The grandmother seemed most anxious that she should fulfill with great exactness all the rules in the Shastres relating to widows, for she fully believed that a wife, by mortifying her own flesh, may win for her dead husband, however great his sins, the greatest blessings and highest honors in the Hindoo heaven; and she had a feeling in her heart that all that could be done for the benefit of Surjo's soul ought to be done; for after all, was he not her grandson as well as the rest?

The trials of a Hindoo widow are many. She is not allowed to sleep on anything but the floor; she is allowed only one meal a day, and that must be of the simplest kind, rice and vegetables; meat and fish are strictly forbidden; while twice a month she has to fast altogether. She is forbidden to wear a single ornament; and her saree must be made of thick white cloth; she is not allowed to plait her hair, or ornament it with vermillion. Now, the wearing of jewels and plaiting of hair are the greatest pleasures of a Hindoo woman; it was no wonder, therefore, that Shoudaminee felt the privation keenly. She was young, about twenty-five; and this life of trial

had come upon her so unexpectedly, which seemed to make it all the harder. Her grandmother tried to cheer her; and Kaminee suggested that it ought to be some consolation to her to know that she was doing something for her husband, while she herself could do nothing. Happily her temper was good; so she tried to bear it patiently without murmuring.

Kaminee was getting more and more dissatisfied with Hindooism. She found no rest in it, she was growing tired of the daily poojas, which she performed with great exactness. At the end of each day she would ask herself if she were benefitted by what she had done; she felt she was not; yet did not know where to learn better. If ever she broached the subject to Nobo, he always turned it off, saying, "A woman's thoughts ought to be in the household, and not go roaming about seeking after a new religion; there was something bad in everything, and he supposed Hindooism was not an exception."

One morning as Kaminee and Nistarinee came up-stairs from washing the plates and finishing other domestic matters after their morning meal, Kaminee said—

"Oh! sister Nistar, as we have nothing particular to do just now, suppose I get my *Sisu shikhya* (Spelling-book), and begin to teach you the alphabet."

"Teach me to read!" exclaimed Nistar; "why, all the old women tell us that if we learn to read we shall become widows."

"Oh! do you believe that?" replied Kaminee. "In my father's house there used to be a school for little girls, and do you think they all became widows? Look, besides, at the families we know. Kartik Baboo's wife can read and write beautifully, and is she a widow?"

"Well, we don't know what may happen," said Nistar; "may be, if we were not widows, we should turn Christians."

"Christians! Well, perhaps there are worse people in the world than Christians," said Kaminee quietly.

Nistarinee fired up directly.

"You like the Christians! Kaminee, after what has happened in our family, what would our father-in-law say?"

"Oh! I said nothing about being a Christian myself; so pray say nothing more about it. Do

you know that in Bholanath Baboo's house the Boes (young married women) are learning to work?" said Kaminee, quickly changing the subject; though she had been thinking a good deal about it lately, but saw at once that it was a dangerous one.

"Needle-work! now that must be rather pleasant," said Nistar. "I suppose learning work won't make us Christians. Who teaches them, Kaminee?"

"Why, it seems their milk-woman has a friend, who knows some one who can work. She went one day, and they were all so delighted with it, that they have engaged her to be their teacher, and are going to give her three rupees a month for it."

"What are you talking about?" asked Shoudaminee, who had just joined them.

"Oh! about learning to work," said Nistar. "When our father-in-law comes home, I should like to go to Bholanath Baboo's house to see how the women do work there."

"And see what the new bride is like," said Kaminee, rather mischievously; "and examine all her jewels!"

"Well, if you think I am curious, you are mistaken," said Nistarinee, who was rather mortified at having her weak point discovered; "so to show you that I am not so, pray go yourself, Mistress Kaminee."

"Now, Nistar, do not get angry so easily," said Shoudaminee, who was generally peace-maker; for she possessed by far the best temper of the three. "You are as soon set on fire as a lucifer match. Besides, I do not care for jewels, as I cannot wear them myself; and Kaminee, you know, is not allowed to go out since her husband went away; so you are the only one who can go."

"Well," said Nistar, who carried her resemblance to lucifer matches to the extent that her fire went out as soon, "well, perhaps I may! I should very much like to tell you if the new bride is fair or dark; what her eyes are like; and whether she is good-tempered or not." So the conversation ended for that day.

At the end of four months, Mohendro returned. The family rejoicing was delightful. All sorts of small feasts were planned; "For it is to be hoped," said his wife, "that we have had enough misfor-

tune to last us till we die, and that now we shall live in peace for the rest of our days."

It happened that about this time Surjo's eldest son, Gopal, reached the age of eight years, the time when all the children of Brahmins are invested with the poita or Brahminical thread, in token of their caste and position in society. His mother thought that there could be no more fitting time for this ceremony than the present, and it was settled accordingly. Mohendro intended to perform it himself.

On the day appointed, Gopal was taken from the women's apartments into the outer court. Here there were a great many Brahmin priests assembled; and in their presence, with innumerable prayers to the gods, Mohendro gave his grandson a new umbrella, a new pair of wooden shoes (*khorom*), a new bamboo stick, and a new dhooty and chudder, the Hindoo man's dress. After this he was presented with a poita, very like a skein of cotton in appearance, with a piece of leather and some *kusa* grass bound round it. For the next three days Gopal was kept in a room by himself, to be purified; it was specially necessary that he should not see a woman's face,

nor hear a woman's voice. At the end of the third day, he went in company with his relatives and friends to the side of the holy river, and offered the seven things he had received three days ago to the goddess Gunga. After bathing himself, he received a new suit of clothes, and was invested in a new poita. Then he returned home, a BRAHMIN on his own account. The ceremony concluded with a grand feast. Notwithstanding the heavy expenses that had fallen upon the household, Mohendro spent no less than five hundred rupees on this worthless form. He was too proud to suffer his friends to see that the troubles that had come on his family had altered his position as a wealthy man, if they had affected his reputation as a spotless Hindoo.

CHAPTER VIII.

KAMINEE'S mind was ill at ease. The separation from her husband made her unhappy, and the cause of the separation made the wretchedness doubly bitter. To her it would have been far better that he should be dead, as his family had supposed him to be, when they took him to the river-side, than to live to be an outcast. Then she could have mourned for him as a faithful Hindoo widow should. Now she could only weep in secret, and long in vain for his return; though she could not help indulging the secret hope, that if by rigorous austerities, she could in any way atone for his sin, and appease the anger of the gods, he might yet be restored to her. With this view, as well as to try and find some comfort in her sadness, she redoubled her attention to all the ceremonies of Hindooism. She increased the number of her daily poojas, and fasted so long and so often as to undermine her strength. Not

content with performing these poojas herself, she would often coax her husband's little sister, Hemlota, to learn them from her. Hemlota was a bright lively little thing, and hardly had patience to go through the long tedious repetitions of these various services; but she could never long resist the winning gentleness of her elder sister, to whom she looked up as to a superior being, and love for her generally made her an apt scholar. But all these things, though they won for her increased esteem in the family, and the hearty love of little Hemlota, brought her no real peace of mind. She was restless and unhappy, and seemed to take but little pleasure in anything.

While she was feeling thus, the grandmother one day expressed a great wish to pay a visit to her favorite Prosonno. She felt as she got older that her strength was failing, and she longed to see her darling once more. Mohendro, though he would not have allowed any one else even to mention Prosonno's name to him, (so bitter was his feeling against the poor boy), was so accustomed to treat his mother with deference, and to accede to all her wishes, that he immediately made arrangements for her to go in a closed palanquin

to the house of an intimate friend of his, whose family she was accustomed to visit in this way, and who lived very near the mission station. It would have been out of the question to allow her to go to the station itself; for a visit to her grandson, in his Christian home, would have revived the memory of the disgrace, the shadow of which still rested on his family, from one of its members having become a Christian. As soon as she arrived at the house, she sent a message to Prosonno that she was there, waiting to receive him, and he joyfully obeyed the summons. He could hardly express his delight at seeing her again. When his first excitement had a little subsided, he asked eagerly—

"How are they all at home? My father and mother; and my beautiful Kaminee? You cannot think how I miss her sweet face and gentle ways."

"Your father and mother are well," she replied; "and so is Kaminee; though of late she has seemed to me to look more sad and anxious than usual. Oh! my boy, my darling, how could you leave us? How can you live like this, away from us all?"

"It is hard," rejoined Prosonno, "and I often feel very sad about it; but I did it to serve a God who calls Himself our Father, who promises to comfort us as a tender mother would comfort her darling child; and who has made Himself known to us as a Sea of Love; and He does help and comfort me."

"A SEA OF LOVE!" repeated the grandmother, "a sea of love! Yes, those are the very words I heard so long ago from the missionary, when he saved my child's life at Saugor, and gave your father the book I gave you. But he told me something else about some One who has made an atonement for our sins. What was that?"

Prosonno had heard his grandmother relate to his uncle Rajendro, how his life had been saved on Saugor Island by the interference of sepoys; but she had never mentioned the missionary or the Testament he had given her; and Prosonno had often wondered how the book which had been such a comfort to him had come into her possession. Now his face beamed with joy, as he replied, "The missionary must have told you of Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God, and so great was His love to us, that He willingly bore the punish-

ment that our sins deserved; and now, if we trust in Him and obey Him, He will make us happy with Him forever in heaven."

"Yes, yes, that was it," exclaimed the grandmother. "What wonderful love! But you said we are to live in heaven forever. Then do not you expect ever to return to the earth in some other form of existence, as the Shastras say we shall?"

"No, no," answered Prosonno. "The book you gave me says that those who once enter heaven shall go no more out. They shall be forever with the Lord, who died for them. They shall see His face, and rejoice in his love; and the heaven where they shall live exceeds in beauty anything that we have ever seen or heard of, or that we can even imagine."

"Those are beautiful words," said his grandmother; "but tell me, my boy, how do you live here? Who supports you?"

"The missionaries do at present," answered Prosonno, "till I can get my own living. As soon as my studies are finished, I shall receive a salary, just enough to live on, that I may spend all my time, telling every one who will listen to

me of the wonderful love we were talking of just now."

"And how do you spend your time now?"

"In study chiefly, as I did when I was at home; and in spare hours I visit my Christian friends."

"Have you many friends?" asked his grandmother.

"Yes," answered Prosonno, "all the Christian Baboos here are very kind to me; especially my friend Rám Doyal, whose conversation first led me to think of Christianity, and the missionary and his wife, who live in that large white house over there; they are living in this country, away from their relations and friends, for the love of Christ, so they understand something of what I feel. Oh! if all of you at home only knew that love! Tell Kaminee, if she will hear you, how I long and pray that she may know it, and how often I think of her, and long to have her with me."

"Yes, I will tell her. But I must go now. Your father would not like me to be longer away from home. Good-bye, my boy. Whatever the others at home may think of you, remember I

always loved you, and mentioned your name with vows in my poojas every day. May the gods send you all success and prosperity!"

Prosonno returned his grandmother's salutation, and sad, yet comforted, he saw her return home.

The grandmother after this visit began to feel her strength declining, and cared less and less for the little events occurring around her. Kaminee saw this with concern, for she was sincerely attached to THAKOOR MA; and of late she had been especially drawn to her, as she was the only one in the house who would speak kindly of her husband. She had received his message from her on the day of the visit, and since then had grown more thoughtful and anxious than ever, though she never seemed inclined to talk to any one of what was passing in her mind.

As time went on, the grandmother's weakness increased, and she was soon glad to leave all the little household occupations, with which she was accustomed to busy herself, to the younger women, while she passed most of her time in quietness or in sleep, till she was no longer able to rise from her bed. Kaminee and Shoudaminee were then in constant attendance on her and were most

dutiful in their attentions. Sometimes she would question them as to the little news they had heard during the day, or ask about the children; but oftener she would lie still, with her eyes closed, as they thought, asleep. On one of these occasions, after lying in this way for some time, she opened her eyes, and seeing Kaminee and Shoudaminee sitting beside her, she said, "Kaminee, did your husband ever speak to you about One who made an atonement for our sins?" Shoudaminee heard the question, and said in a whisper to Kaminee, "Her mind must be wandering, from her being so weak. Perhaps she is feverish. Shall I bathe her head?" She rose, and was going for some water, when the grandmother, who had heard the whisper, said, "No, my daughter, my mind is quite clear; stay and hear what I have to say."

Shoudaminee came near to her, and she repeated her question to Kaminee.

"Yes," replied Kaminee, "he told me that and many other strange things about a new religion he has found. I suppose, now, it must have been Christianity."

"Yes, it was," answered the grandmother. "I

wish I knew more about it; but this one thing about the atonement I know, because he told me about it; and the missionary told me the same long ago. It was the Son of God who did it, because He loved us."

"That is what the Christians believe," said Shoudaminee; "but we know it cannot be true."

"But I think it must be true; I have long thought so," replied the grandmother, earnestly. "I will tell you why. We all know that God has made us, and made us with hearts to love. Now this religion says that He is a sea of love, and that His Son died for us, purely out of love, that we might love Him and be His servants forever; yes, even after death never more to return to the earth in any form, but to be with Him forever in heaven. But who ever thinks of loving Shiva or Vishnoo?"

Kaminee thought for a few minutes, and then said, "But how can you call that a religion of love, which has separated your grandson from us all, and makes him willing to live away from us?"

"Is it Christianity or Hindooism that has done that?" replied the grandmother. "Hindooism

has taught his family to try to forget him, or to hate him; but he says his new religion has made him love us more than ever; because it teaches him that the Saviour, who saves him, loves us, and wishes to save us too, if we would only ask Him to do it. I should like to know if He would save me. Often during the last few days, when you thought I was asleep, I have been praying to Him to save me if He will."

Then after a pause, she added, earnestly, "Yes, I will trust in Him. I do love Him for His great love to me."

Shoudaminee was startled by this sudden confession. That the Thakoor Ma, whom she had always been accustomed to treat with so much respect, should have said such things as she had just heard, seemed to her perfectly dreadful. She was afraid to hear more, so she said gently:

"Thakoor Ma, don't talk any more now; you are not strong enough. Try to sleep a little."

So saying, she left the room, to quiet her child, who had awoke from its sleep and was crying; but Kaminee remained a moment longer to ask, "Could I find out any more about this new religion

you seem to like so much? I should like to know more of it."

"I cannot tell you more," replied the grandmother; "but your husband left some of his Christian books with me, in the hope that some of his family might read them at some time. You will find them in the large box in the corner of that empty room, next to mine. There is the key, I hope you may think about them as I do."

Just then Mohendro's wife came in to inquire after her mother-in-law, and Kaminee, her mind full of strange, new thoughts, was glad to escape to the solitude of her own room.

As soon as she was alone, she said to herself, "How strange that the Thakoor Ma should believe this religion, when she has heard so little of it. I half wish it were true. It must be very happy to believe, as the Christians do, in the love of God. No one will see me now, I will go and get the books she told me of."

So saying, she went to the room her grandmother had indicated; and, finding the books, returned with them carefully hidden in the folds of her robe to her own chambei

That night Kaminee slept but little. Instead of retiring to rest at her usual hour, she seated herself by a dim light, to read her husband's NEW TESTAMENT. She began at the beginning, with the wonderful story of the birth of Christ; of the wise men who came from far to see and worship Him, guided by the bright star in the east; and so fascinated was she by the simple story that she read eagerly page after page. It was far on in the night before she thought of sleep; and when at last she did stop in her reading, it was with a serious resolve that she would not let her mind rest till it rested in the truth.

Many days and nights passed in this way, the days being spent beside the aged grandmother, and long hours in the night poring over the New Testament. The more Kaminee read, the more she was fascinated and attracted by the new religion. Its wonderful purity, and the noble spirit of disinterested self-sacrifice, of love and kindness to all men, that it continually inculcated, were entirely new to her; and she could not help acknowledging in the depths of her heart, how infinitely superior these were to anything she had ever learned from Hindooism. And as each night

found her returning to her new-found treasure, the wish was growing in her heart, more and more strong, though she was afraid to confess it to herself, that she might find this new and beautiful religion to be indeed the true one.

One day, while she was in this state of mind, when she went to see her grandmother, she perceived a change in her appearance. It was evident she was sinking fast; and all who looked on her, could see plainly that she had not many hours to live. Now and then her mind seemed to be wandering; but as Kaminee approached and spoke to her, a pleasant smile on her features showed that she recognized her, and she said faintly:

"Stay beside me; let me see you as long as I can see anything."

Kaminee seated herself beside her, and busied herself in all the little offices of love that could soothe her grandmother's last hours. Indeed, all the members of the family were constantly in her room that day, for the Thakoor Ma, besides the respect that was due, had won the love of the whole household by her good temper and her kindness to them all.

Chondro Kumar, who was now the eldest son

of the house, had gone to summon the Brahmin priests to perform the religious ceremonies for the dying, while the other members of the family awaited, in gloomy silence, the solemnization of the last rites.

The grandmother spoke very little to any one. Now and then she would address a question to Kaminee; but the greater part of the time, those around her could see her lips move, though no one heard what she said. Once Kaminee bent over her and said:

"Thakoor Ma, were you asking for anything? Can I do anything for you?" She answered, faintly, "No one can do anything for me now, but the SON OF GOD; I was praying to Him to help and save me." These words were spoken so low, that only Kaminee could catch their meaning; but as she heard them, she almost envied her grandmother, and felt for a moment as though she would gladly change places with her, to have, instead of her own troubled thoughts, the peace and rest which she enjoyed in trusting in her new-found Saviour. She continued her sad watch, which she could see was now fast drawing to a close; but the grandmother spoke once again, and

this time they all heard the words, "O JESUS CHRIST, Thou Son of God, who didst die for my sins, take me to be with Thee in Thy heaven."

Kaminee's heart joined in the prayer; and so absorbed was she in her own thoughts, that she did not see the startled look of surprise on all the faces round her; but the opportune entrance of the priests at that moment prevented any remark being made on the subject.

As soon as they entered, one of them began repeating a prayer, while Mohendro gently lifted his mother from her bed, to a couch made of kusa grass, which had been placed ready beside it. The priest then inquired if she were able to give the offerings of cattle or money always made by dying persons to priests, as their last conscious act; but she lay on the couch quite insensible, breathing gently. Her last act of consciousness had been that prayer to the Saviour whom she had learned to trust. Mohendro, who pretended not to have heard it, replied that he would offer the gifts in her name; and gave a magnificent offering of money, such as befitted his wealth and his dignity as a priest on such a solemn occasion.

When this ceremony was performed, Mohendro

proceeded to sprinkle her head with Ganges water; but before it could be brought, she had gently breathed her last. As soon as the women heard that she was dead, they uttered cries of lamentation, and went on for a long time weeping and wailing most loudly.

When their excitement had a little subsided, the old woman's sister, and her daughter-in-law, Mohendro's wife, sprinkled the Ganges water on her head. They then washed the corpse, and adorned the bed whereon it lay with wreaths of flowers. When this was done, they covered it with a white cloth, dipped in oil, which had been perfumed with otto of sandal-wood; while Mohendro, his younger brother Rajendro, and his two sons, Chondro and Nobo, prepared to carry it to the river-side, where the body was to be burned. Rajendro's two sons took each two vessels, in which were food and fire, with which they were to precede the corpse on its way to its destination. The priests followed; and thus the procession took its way through the most unfrequented parts of the town to the place of burning, amid the loud wailings and lamentations of the women, who,

with all this ostentatious show of mourning, felt real sorrow, for they had all loved her.

When they reached the bank of the river, they set down geı tly on the ground the light couch on which the corpse had been carried, with the head towards the south, and then went down into the river to bathe. Their ablutions finished, Chondro and Nobo, as soon as they had found a suitable spot, began to collect wood for the funeral pile. When it was ready, Mohendro took the body of his mother in his arms, bathed it in the river, and rubbed over it saffron and sandal-wood, repeating the names of the holy mountains, of Gunga and the other seven sacred rivers, and those of the four oceans. When this ceremony was completed, he dressed the body in new clothes, and placed it gently on the funeral pile, which the young men had been busily decorating with flowers and garlands. Mohendro then took a torch in his hand, and after again invoking the holy places, "May the gods with flaming mouths burn this corpse."

After this prayer, he walked round the pile, with his right hand towards it; then dropping his left knee to the ground, he applied the fire to it,

and to the mouth of the corpse, while the priests recited these words: "O Fire, may she be reproduced from thee, that she may attain the region of celestial bliss. May this offering be auspicious!"

The whole party then walked in procession round the pile, each throwing fresh pieces of wood on the fire, saying, "Salutation to thee, who dost consume flesh!"

When the body was burnt, they again walked in procession round the pile, this time with their left hands toward it, and their faces carefully turned away from the fire. After this they proceeded to the river and bathed in it, offering the prayer, "Waters, purify us!" and then made the usual offering of water to the spirit of the departed one.

They now changed their clothes, and seated themselves on the grass, at a little distance from the burning place, to rest; while they sought consolation in repeating sentences on the shortness and vanity of human life, such as these:—

"Foolish is he who seeks permanence in the human state; unsolid like the stem of the plantain tree; transient like the foam of the sea."

"The earth is perishable; the oceans, the gods themselves pass away; how shall not that bubble, mortal man, meet destruction?"

"All that is low must finally perish; all that is elevated must ultimately fall. All compound bodies must end in dissolution, and life is concluded with death."

The party remained by the river-side during the whole of the day; and towards evening, took their way home, Mohendro carrying a new earthen jar full of water, and the rest walking in procession, led by Rajendro's youngest son, as he was the youngest among them, while one of the priests walked on in front bearing a thick staff in his hand, with which he was supposed to frighten away ghosts and evil spirits. When they reached the door of their own house, Mohendro, after purifying a spot of ground, by washing it with a brush, made of kusa grass, dipped in water, erected on it a small altar of earth, covered it and the ground all round it with kusa grass, and then proceeded to prepare a funeral cake, made of boiled rice, teela-seed, honey, milk, butter, and sugar, which he laid on the altar with these words:—

"O mother, may this first funeral cake which shall restore thy head, be acceptable to thee!"

Then purifying the spot again in the same manner as before, he placed some flowers, a lighted lamp, betel leaves, and an earthen vessel containing teela-seed and water, with a roll of woolen cloth, beside the cake, as offerings to the departed spirit, saying, "May these things be acceptable to thee;" after which they all entered the house.

For ten days the mourning for the Thakoor Ma lasted. During this time, none of the family tasted any food during the day, but partook of one meal at night. This meal consisted only of such things (destitute of all seasoning) as they could procure ready for eating, as no cooking must go on in the house. The men refrained from shaving and smoking; the women went without their ornaments, and neglected one of their favorite employments, that of braiding and plaiting their long luxuriant hair. Every one was gloomy and silent, and even the daily poojas, which nothing else could interfere with, were suspended. During the ten days, funeral cakes were offered by Mohendro, in the same way as on the first day; the number being increased each day

according to the number of days. These cakes were supposed each to restore some part of the renewed body of the departed one. On the morning of the tenth day, he offered ten funeral cakes, saying these words, "May this tenth cake, which shall fully satisfy the hunger and thirst of thy renewed body, be acceptable to thee!"

After this another ceremony was to be performed, that of gathering the ashes of the funeral pile, which had been carefully preserved at the burning place for the purpose. After various offerings of food and water to the departed spirit, the priests who were assembled to assist in this rite, recited prayers, after which all the priests were invited to partake of a sumptuous feast, and Mohendro gave a large sum of money to the principal Brahmin, as a fee for fully completing the obsequies performed in honor of his mother.

The priests then offered another prayer, after which all the men of the family accompanied them to the burning place. On arriving there, the whole party invoked the deities of the place, by offerings of various kinds of food, water, wreaths of flowers, and incense, while Mohendro repeated the words, "Salutation to the gods, whose

mouths are devouring fire!" He then repaired to the place where the bones of the dead were concealed, sprinkled them with various perfumes, and put them in a kind of casket made of leaves. This he placed in a new earthen vessel, which he carefully closed with a lid, and tied up with strong thread. Then choosing a clean spot, where he thought encroachments of the river were not likely to take place, he dug a deep hole, the bottom of which he lined carefully with kusa grass. He then placed the earthen pot in the hole, and covered it with earth, thorns, and moss. After some time had elapsed, he would again visit the spot, throw the ashes of the funeral pile into the river, and fill up with earth the excavation where they had rested. Now the whole party bathed in the river, put on clean clothes, and had themselves shaved. They then returned home, and, according to Hindoo ritual, were considered purified.

As for Kaminee, she was glad in her heart when these ceremonies were over. They wearied her, and seemed to her more useless and vain than ever. She read every night of those ten days of mourning in the Testament, and had lingered long, thinking an l wondering, over the Christian

doctrine of the Resurrection. She longed to know what was truth, and what was error. She was beginning to love the religion she was learning about; but what if it should be false and mistaken after all? She thought and thought, but her thought seemed only to grow troubled and confused. She determined to question Nobo, and try if he could satisfy her mind on the subject. So one day, when he had finished dinner, while she was in a small room preparing his paun, (a preparation of areca-nut, mace, and other spices, wrapt in a piece of betel-leaf, of which the Hindoos are very fond), and he was standing by one of the pillars in the verandah, waiting for it, after looking cautiously round, to see that there was no one near and likely to overhear their conversation, she began, "Nobo, have you not read some English books about the reasons Christians have for believing their religion to be the true one? I wish you would tell me some of those reasons."

"Why, sister!" exclaimed Nobo, "what have you got into your head now? You could not understand them if I did tell you."

"Yes, I could, I am sure I could; I wish you would tell me them, Nobo."

"I tell you, indeed! surely one in the family believing that nonsense is enough. It brought us trouble enough at any rate. Besides, what business can a woman have with such questions? I see how it is. You are tired of your household duties, which are a woman's proper calling."

"No, indeed; I do quite as much as Shoudaminee or Nistarinee; but Nobo, none of my occupations need my thoughts, and a woman can think, you know. I have been thinking a great deal lately about Christianity; that is, ever since the Thakoor Ma went to see your brother. Nobo, what if it should be true after all?"

Nobo was startled by the sudden earnestness with which she said this, but he said quietly—

"Well, sister, and what are your reasons for thinking it might be true?"

"Why, I have been thinking about what the Thakoor Ma said your brother told her, about its being all a religion of love. The love of God gave it to us, and the essence of it in us is love to Him. In that it seems to be just what we want, at least I want it. Your grandmother is dead, and your brother is worse than dead to me. I

have no one here left to love; but I could love the God of the Christians, even from the little I have heard about Him."

"A woman's reason, truly," said Nobo, smiling, "which springs only from feeling. But, after all, that is not PROOF."

"But I have thought of another reason," said Kaminee, earnestly. "It is this. We agree even with Christians in thinking that religion is a pure and holy thing, and if so, it must have a purifying influence; for if a tree be good, its fruit will be good. Now Hindooism consists only in forms and ceremonies; the heart is left untouched. I thought of this especially when Surjo wanted the priests to perform the ceremony of atonement for your brother. Offering cowrie-shells and giving money to Brahmins could never have made him a Hindoo in heart again; and yet it would have restored him to caste, and all the privileges of Hindooism. But Christianity, because love to a holy Saviour is its spring, purifies the heart. Your brother told me that the last time I saw him."

"My brother, indeed!" said Nobo, bitterly "A vile Christian outcast, *my* brother!" But seeing a shade come over Kaminee's sweet face,

and her eyes fill with tears, he added more gently—

"Don't cry, sister; I did not mean to grieve you; good-bye, I am going out now. Don't trouble your head with subjects you cannot understand." So saying he left her, and went out of the house.

Kaminee had complained that there was no one left for her to love; but she forgot at the moment her sister-in-law Shoudaminee; and very soon her loving nature began to cling to her, as it had clung to the old grandmother. The sisters were practically in the same circumstance, deprived of their husbands; and although Kaminee had not to endure all the privations, and conform to all the austerities of an actual widow, her life was lonely and aimless enough. Another bond of union between them was the memory of the grandmother's illness and death. They would often talk together of her last strange words, and now and then Kaminee would venture to tell her sister a little of what she read in the Testament about the new religion the grandmother had found and trusted in. Shoudaminee would listen attentively sometimes, because she saw that Kami-

nee liked talking of these things: but they made very little impression on her mind. She was not accustomed to think much at any time, and when she did, the care of her children and her household duties seemed enough to occupy her whole thoughts. However, their friendship, such as it was, grew and strengthened, and was a source of great comfort to both the sisters, though it left Kaminee as much alone as ever in her new thoughts and feelings.

After the way in which Nobo had treated the inquiries she had ventured to make, she was afraid to ask him more of what she longed to know, and this led her, timidly at first, but by degrees more and more confidently, to pray to the Christian's God, that if He were indeed the true God, He would teach her what was the true religion. At last, however, one day, she summoned up courage to speak to Nobo again, as he was sitting reading in one of the back verandahs of the house. She came up to him, and began cautiously—

"Nobo, do you remember advising me one day not to think of things I could not understand! It might be very good advice, but I want you to tell me how I am to follow it. I am constantly

thinking of what I have heard about Christianity. How can I help it?"

"Why, sister, you should be the last to ask that question; you who have the advantage so few women have, of being able to understand the prayers and montros of our religion. Why do you not study and repeat them more? If you must think, meditate on the attributes of the gods; that would be safe thinking for you."

"But all my thinking will not undo the wrong thoughts I have had about them already, if they are wrong. If we believe that the gods will punish those who offend them, and then, just because they choose, they say 'I forgive you,' how can we expect them to reward those who are good and religious like your father? Now your brother told me that the Christian's God said He would punish sin, and He did punish it. His own Son became incarnate to bear the punishment for us; therefore I could trust him."

"Well done, sister," said Nobo, laughing; "you have found your way to the favorite argument of the Christians. But how could you trust a Being who could punish the innocent for the guilty?"

"Because He took the punishment on Himself,

of His own free will, out of love to us. If He was God, it could not have been laid on Him without His will Besides, He said so Himself. I have read—"

Here Kaminee suddenly recollected that she was betraying her secret, and looked up anxiously into Nobo's face, fearing lest he should ask her what she had read; but, fortunately for her, her father-in-law appeared at that moment, and called Nobo away to talk to him in his own room.

The subject on which Mohendro wished to consult with his son was a no less important one than the marriage of his little daughter Hemlota. She was now between seven and eight years of age, when, according to Hindoo custom, a father ought to seek a bridegroom for his daughter. Chondro Kumar was very little comfort to the old man, so that Nobo was the only one with whom he could advise on matters relating to the family interests.

Nobo agreed that it was quite time to think of the marriage. His only objection was the fear that his father would not have money enough to meet the expenses of the ceremony, in a manner befitting his position.

"Leave that to me, my boy," replied Mohendro; "the family honor must not suffer now, after I have done so much to redeem it. Hemlota must be married; and as for the money, that must go, if is necessary. If it was written on my forehead that my house should come to poverty, what can I do against my fate?"

"Yes, indeed," said Nobo, "let the money go if needful; little Hemlota will be delighted with her new dignity, and with the jewels you will give her."

Then followed a consultatiton between Mohendro and his son, as to the number and costliness of the jewels which the little girl was to receive; it ended by Mohendro saying—

"I shall send for the ghottok to-morrow, to look out for a bridegroom from some respectable family, and to make all the needful arrangements."

The way in which marriages are made among Hindoos would seem very strange to English readers. When a father wishes to get his daughter married, he sends for a ghottok or go-between. This man generally belongs to the lowest class of Brahmins, and his business is to introduce the

father of a young man, who wishes his son to be married, to the father of one who wishes to find a bridegroom for his daughter. If the fathers are mutually satisfied with the connection, the marriage takes place, and the ghottok receives a handsome present in money from both families. That evening Mohendro imparted his intention to his wife, and the next day it was the subject of eager conversation among the women.

While Mohendro and the rest of the family were engrossed with this affair, Nobo's thoughts were very differently engaged. The conversation he had held with Kaminee had not escaped from his mind, and now it made him feel troubled and uneasy. He had felt unsettled on the subject of religion ever since Prosonno's baptism; but he was not at all prepared to give up his old prejudices in favor of Hindoo customs, or to make the sacrifice that his brother had done; so he tried to dismiss the subject altogether from his thoughts. Now it came back to him with fresh force. He had been putting the truth away from him; and here was a woman, with little or no teaching as it seemed to him, with nothing but her woman's instinctive sense of what is true and false to guide

her, feeling her way, as it were, gradually, but surely, to the arguments that proved it true. He did not know that she had the surest of all teaching, even the teaching of Him who hides His mysteries "from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes." But in a few days, two events happened to turn the current of his thoughts in other directions.

The ghottok who had been employed to look for a bridegroom for Hemlota, in a short time returned to say that he had hitherto been unsuccessful in finding one whose position was worthy of Mohendro's daughter, and he feared he should remain so. He had, indeed, heard of several young men, belonging to highly respectable Brahmin families, but they had all heard more or less exaggerated accounts of Prosonno's detention among his relatives: and all were doubtful of the caste of a family which had had a Christian living among them for some weeks.

In vain had the ghottok protested against the possibility of a blot on Mohendro's caste, and told of his strict austerities and constant poojas, of his recent pilgrimage, and the large sums of money he had spent on the various shrines by the

way;—the feeling against him remained. There were daughters of other families, they said, whose caste had never been questioned, and they preferred that their sons should seek wives from such; so that the poor man had but a sad story to bring to his employer.

Mohendro at first received him very angrily, and demanded to know who had dared to call in question the caste of a priest of the strictest order; and Nobo had to use all the arguments he could think of, to appease his father's indignation. At last the old man gave in, saying sadly—

"Surjo was right when he foresaw this. It is my fate. What can I do? Well, well, we can let the matter rest for a few months, and then, if necessary, we must remove to some distant place, which the news of the misfortunes that have befallen our family has not reached."

He then dismissed the ghottok with a small present, and sorrowfully betook himself to the poojas he always performed at that hour.

The other event that occasioned some excitement in the family, was that Nobo one day returned from his evening walk with the intelligence that Prosonno had broken a blood-vessel, and was very

ill. He had been to visit at the house where the Thakoor Ma had gone to see Prosonno, and there he had heard the news. On hearing it, he had gone over immediately to see him, for he had always in his heart retained a great affection for his brother; though he never allowed himself to show it at home, for fear of displeasing his father. He told the family that he had found Prosonno well taken care of by his Christian friends. His chief friend, Rám Doyal, had removed him to his own house; as he could make him more comfortable there than in his own little room; and his wife, Suseela, could prepare for Prosonno all the little dainties he had been accustomed to in his own home. The missionary and his wife, too, were very kind to him, and often came to see him; and Prosonno felt and acknowledged their kindness; though in moments of weakness, when his mind wandered, he would murmur all the dear household names he had learnt to love from childhood. His mother and Kaminee he constantly called for. Nobo went on to say that Prosonno was delighted to see him, and sent his love and remembrance to them all, and would not let him go till he had promised to tell Kaminee

that he still prayed that he might see her again before he died.

Kaminee received this message very differently from the first which her husband had sent her. She had listened eagerly to every word Nobo had said, and now quietly went to her own room. She could not trust herself to speak; but as soon as she was alone, she burst into tears, and wept long and bitterly. At last a thought came into her mind that made her face light up with joy.

"Yes," she said to herself, "I can do it, and I will; I long to know more of Christianity. Oh, how gladly he would teach me! I am a Christian in my heart; I constantly pray to the Christian's God. Why should I not be with my husband? And he is ill, too, but he will get well if he has me to love him and care for him. Yes, I will go."

And Kaminee lay down to rest that night, repeating to herself some words she had read in one of her husband's Christian books—

"Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and THY GOD MY GOD."

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Kaminee awoke the next morning, her first thoughts turned to this new resolve to join her husband. She went over the matter again and again in her own mind, and each time the resolve grew stronger. She longed to talk it over with some one in the house; but who was there whom she could trust? The grandmother was much missed in the family, especially by her. The woman's side of the house, too, was unusually dull; for Nistarinee had persuaded her husband to let her go to her father's house, on a visit of three months, and she was not to return till after the Durga Pooja.* After considering the plan in all its aspects for nearly a fortnight, Kaminee ventured to impart it to Shoudaminee. One day, when they were sitting in the verandah, after having finished their morning work, Kaminee said—

"Do you know, Shoudaminee, I have been

* Doorga Poojah, a great religious festival in Bengal.

thinking a great deal about the Christian religion that your brother-in-law now professes. You know he told Thakoor Ma something of it that day she went to see him, and she told me what he had said. She also gave me a copy of the Christian Shastres, which she told me a Padré had given to her fifty years ago, when she paid that wonderful visit to Gunga Saugor. She gave this book to her grandson, when his father forbade him to read it; he left it with her when he went away; and now I have been reading it myself."

"Have you?" asked Shoudaminee. "I have never seen you read it; when do you find time?"

"After you have all gone to sleep at night, I get out my book and read. It is a most fascinating book; I think I believe a great deal in it already."

"Ah!" said Shoudaminee, "what would our father-in-law say if he knew you were courageous enough to read that book? What would you do, if he found you out?"

"I don't know," said Kaminee, "but I love to read the book; and I have been thinking that I should like to become a Christian myself."

"Become a Christian yourself!" returned Shou-

daminee; "how could you do so? Think what you would have to give up; your father and mother, brother and sisters; you would lose your caste and all your friends. Now, if I were to become a Christian, and go and live with them, no one would care. I am an orphan, and my only brother has such a bad-tempered wife that I should never mind losing them. Gopal and Komodinee are my only treasures here."

A bright thought struck Kaminee; what if Shoudaminee would go with her! They would manage better in getting away, and she would take care that her sister-in-law was well cared for. She was longing to see her husband; and as she had said so much to Shoudaminee, she now determined to tell her the whole plan: so she said, rather timidly—

"How do you think it would do, sister Shouda, if we were both to go to the Christians? I long to learn more about their religion; and you know the Baboo has been ill; and I am sure he would like me to go and nurse him: and you could live with us, and I think we should all be very happy. I must go, if you do not."

Shoudaminee was bewildered by the thought.

"What will our father-in-law say?" were the first words she uttered.

But the more she thought of it, the pleasanter it seemed. The idea of losing Kaminee altogether was unbearable. "Thakoor Ma dead! Kaminee gone to the Christians! Nistarinee away from home! What would their part of the house be like?" The sisters sat long together discussing the question. Kaminee could not wait many days; so she brought the conversation to a close by saying—

"Well, sister, it is settled that we go, and take Gopal and Komodinee with us: I will see to the arrangements about our going."

Day after day they talked together, and the plan seemed to grow more feasible. The time of their consultation was the hour or two which followed the morning meal. Mohendro's wife then generally went to sleep; and Komodinee and Hemlota were despatched down-stairs to play. They were long, however, in reaching a full and mature decision. Shoudaminee was desirous that they should manage it entirely by themselves: Kaminee did not see how that could be done. Her view of the case prevailed; and it was agreed

that she should write to her husband, and bribe one of the women-servants to take the letter.

The next day Kaminee called one of them, named Durgamonee, into her private room, and asked if she would undertake for her a private errand of great importance: promising that she should be amply rewarded, provided that she told the matter to no one else. The woman, partly by hanging back, and partly by skillful questioning, managed to learn the whole scheme. But Kaminee, though a little afraid and mortified that her entire plans were in the power of a third person, felt that it was best that her husband should also know them clearly. She ended by drawing from her jewel-box a massive gold bracelet which was to be the reward if the commission were faithfully executed. That afternoon an opportunity occurred. About five o'clock, Mohendro's wife, who was cooking her husband's evening meal, asked if there was any sugar in the house, as she wished to make some cakes. There was none; but Durgamonee offered to go and get some from the bazaar. The mistress agreed, and further suggested that she should go to a particular shop some distance on and buy Gopal some

sweetmeats called Sondesh. "Don't be out after dark," she said, "and make the shopman give the sugar cheap." Durgamonee ran quickly to her young mistress.

"Now is the time," she said; "give me your letter." The letter was given; and Kaminee sat down in her own room in some excitement to reflect on what she had done. A half-prayer rose to the God whose religion she would soon profess, that He would help her scheme; and would make all things straight for them, as He had done for her husband.

In the meantime, Durgamonee went out and walked about rather idly in the bazaar, wondering at this new freak of the younger women in the house. "But what does it matter to me," she thought, "the bracelet is to be mine, if I do my work well. It will make my fortune: but I must be quick, or the darkness will catch me before I get home."

The sugar and sweetmeats were bought after a full half-hour's bargaining; and then she proceeded to the missionary station, eating one of the sondeshes by the way. If her mistress thought that they were rather few, she had only to say

that the shop-keeper was a hard man, that she was afraid of the sun setting, and could not stay to argue the matter to the end!

The missionary station was soon discovered by a large building at the side of the high road known as the "Padré's School."

Durgamonee asked the gate-keeper if a Baboo of the name of Prosonno Kumar Chatterjee lived there. The door-keeper answered "yes," and directed her to go to the house near the school, and inquire there. Prosonno was just coming out of the doorway. He recognized her at once, went up to her, and eagerly inquired how the family were. Durgamonee informed him of all that had recently happened, and asked him in return how he was getting on, and how he liked his change of life; where he lived; and what he ate and drank. After extracting from him all the information she wanted, she brought out the letter, and said, carelessly, "Here, Baboo, is something for you; the new bride sent it by me."

Taking it to his room, Prosonno read the letter, lost in thankfulness and wonder. Kaminee wishing to become a Christian! She who had so abhorred everything connected with Christianity!

That she should be longing and seeking for it That she should be wanting to see him again when he had fancied that she hated him! That his grandmother had died with the name of Jesus on her lips! That the wife of Surjo, who had been his greatest persecutor, should be wishing to join the Christians with her children! "Surely," he thought, "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts; neither are His ways as our ways."

He had forgotten Durgamonee's presence altogether; and it was only when she asked, "Well, Baboo, what am I to say?" that he came to realities again.

"Come with me, and I will give you the answer," he said as he led the way to the missionary's house. The missionary and his wife were truly glad, they gave Prosonno abundant sympathy, and the lady was indulging in some pleasant air-castles about her future pupils, when the messenger reminded them that she must hasten home.

So Durgamonee was told that "the two women and children were to be ready at seven o'clock the day after to-morrow. The missionary and Prosonno were to come and wait in a carriage at the end of the narrow lane at the back of the house:

Durgamonee was to let the women out by the side-door, and see them safely away." Durgamonee returned home quite elated with the information she had acquired, and at the speedy prospect of substantial wealth. The discussion about the sweetmeats was soon over; and when her mother-in-law was busy with the cakes, Kaminee followed Durga into a quiet corner, and heard all that she had to tell.

The next two days were strange ones to Kaminee. She longed for the hour of their departure, but felt afraid lest anything should happen to prevent it.

The wished-for hour at length arrived. Kaminee and Shoudaminee had spent the day as usual; no suspicion had been raised. Durga had been sometimes tempted to tell one of her fellow-servants, as the matter would have afforded a first-rate subject of gossip; but the thought of the bracelet held her back. When the twilight was quickly fading into darkness, and Mohendro's wife had retired to prepare her husband's meal, Kaminee and her sister tied up their little bundles. It was with beating hearts that they did so; and Kaminee's thoughts went back to that evening

when her husband had talked with her before he went away. Soon Durgamonee hastened into her room and said—

"Be quick, the time is come. A carriage is at the bottom of the lane, and the Baboo has waved a handkerchief out of the window."

Shoudaminee was hastily called with the children, who wondered what was to happen; and they all slipped quietly down-stairs. The garden gate was already open, and in less than a minute they were in the carriage. Durgamonee returned with the gold bracelet in her hand; and she began inventing all kinds of falsehoods in case any one should tax her with assisting the affair.

It was with strange feelings that Prosonno beheld his wife after their two years' separation. He wanted to see if she was changed; but that was out of the question at present, for both the women kept their faces closely veiled. Kaminee perhaps would have spoken if it had not been for the presence of the missionary. The conversation was kept up between Prosonno and Gopal, who was greatly excited with the novelty of his journey. He remembered his uncle well, and amused

him on the way by giving his version of the family news.

The strangers were taken at once to Rám Doyal's house, where the missionary's wife was waiting with Suseela to welcome them. Long and pleasant were the communings of husband and wife together over the story of the last two years; Kaminee had to tell of the growth of her faith, her convictions, and her peace. Prosonno also had to describe his Christian life and the Christian religion.

A few weeks were spent at Rám Doyal's where Suseela did her best to secure their comfort. Kaminee felt herself at home much sooner than Shoudaminee, but that was natural, as she had her husband to consult where anything needed to be explained. One thing that struck them both was the treatment of the women. Among the Christians, women (they saw) were considered capable of something more than being good cooks. They were greatly pleased that the missionary's wife had engaged to teach them for an hour a day. Prosonno, in the meantime, was diligently preparing their new home, and it was soon ready to be occupied.

The evening that Kaminee and Shoudaminee had left their Hindoo home, Mohendro returned to the house unusually tired and downcast, and said to his wife, "I do not know what is to become of us. Chondro Kumar has been gambling, and has suffered several losses: our money is fast being spent: what with that apostate's behaviour, and the expenses that fell on us at that time; what with Surjo's funeral, my pilgrimage, Thakoor Ma's Sraddha, and the putting on of Gopal's Poita, we cannot hold out much longer. Hemlota is not married, and there seems little chance of her being so." His wife, who dreaded her husband's temper, told him he was in low spirits, and tried to enliven him by an unusually good supper, and telling him the gossip of the day. The next morning the house seemed remarkably quiet. No voices of children sounded in the courts of the house, and the younger women had disappeared. Mohendro's wife went to Shoudaminee's room but to her horror found it empty. The house was searched, but neither women nor children could be found. None could imagine whither they had gone; but Nobo, who called to mind his conversation with Kaminee, declared his suspicion

that they too had joined the hated Christians. The family distress was great; not so much on account of the women as for Gopal, the only grandson of the house, their eldest son's only boy. Mohendro at first raged and stormed; then he shed bitter tears; and almost poured curses on the gods for the evils that they had suffered so often to enter his habitation. Nobo proposed to go to the magistrate; but his father, fearful of another heavy expense, which was almost sure to be fruitless, suggested that he should make only private inquiries. He did so; but returned disappointed. "Gopal being an orphan and not of age, his mother had full right to keep him." Durgamonee had been so zealous in the search that no one suspected her of conniving at their escape.

At last a strange thing came to light. In the course of the day, while Mohendro's wife was looking over Kaminee's room and possession, she came upon a book that looked old and worn. She carried it straight to her husband. He recognized it, though he had seen it but once, and that nearly fifty years ago. It was the New Testament, the gift of the Christian missionary at Saugor! He gave it in faith, not knowing where

the seed of the word might fall. For forty years it lay silent and hidden, but it had fallen at length on good ground; and when it sprang up, it had borne fruit a hundredfold.

CHAPTER X.

IT was a lovely Sabbath morning; and all nature seemed rejoicing in the return of the day of rest. The grass and trees looked fresh and green, after the soft showers of the previous night; a light breeze poured music through the boughs of the feathery fir-trees, and the early sunshine rested lovingly on the reviving earth; typical of the sunshine on many hearts in the mission station, that awoke that morning full of joy and thankfulness.

The missionary and his wife began their day with special prayer for a blessing on all their Sabbath work, and chiefly for those who were for the first time to confess their faith in Christ; for in their little church that day, Kaminee and her sister-in-law were both to be baptized.

It was now two months since they had first come among the Christian community; and during that time, it had been Prosonno's delight to

teach his beloved wife the full truth of that blessed religion into which she had begun to inquire. The missionary's wife had had several long conversations both with her and Shoudaminee, especially the latter, as she naturally felt more lonely than her sister in her new circumstances; and her gentle kindness had at last succeeded in dispelling a great deal of the stranger's shyness, and in winning her confidence. She did not even know so much of Christianity as Kaminee; but what she had learned from her sister had won her love, and made her wish to be a Christian.

As for Prosonno and Kaminee, it would have been hard to say which was the happier of the two. Kaminee's doubts had given way before the arguments set before her by her husband, both by words and by example; and now her prayer was, that she might daily grow in love to the Saviour who had first loved her. Prosonno again had that morning to give thanks with a full heart to the God who had heard his prayers, and brought his wife to him, to be a loving companion to her husband, and a faithful helper in every good word and work.

Kaminee and her sister, as we have said before,

were to be baptized in the little native church belonging to the station. Young men, when they embraced Christianity, were usually baptized in the English church at some little distance from the station, that the English friends who helped to support the mission might have the gratification of witnessing the ceremony; but women preferred, and their Christian friends preferred for them, the more private service of the native church near to their own homes.

The service was to begin at ten o'clock; but a little before that hour Shoudaminee entered the missionary's house, and asked to see the lady. After a kind welcome, she said,—

"Ma'am, I have brought you Gopal's poita.* He had it given him only a short time ago; but I have persuaded him to let me take it off this morning; and now I bring it to you, as a sign that I will try to bring him up as a Christian."

The missionary's wife was much pleased with this act, coming, as it did, from the woman herself; for she knew what a sacrifice of feeling it must have cost her, and she said kindly,—

"May God give you strength and wisdom to

* The sacred thread worn over the shoulder by Brahmins.

do so, my dear Shoudaminee. When Jesus came to this world, He showed special kindness to little children, and He loves them still. He will surely smile on your efforts to teach your little ones of His love; and to train them up in His service."

At the appointed hour of worship, the little sanctuary was full. Kaminee was seated on the women's side of the church, near her friend Suseela; and the missionary's wife sat not far off with Shoudaminee. They had often attended Christian public worship before, but Kaminee had not ceased to be impressed with the beauty and simplicity of its order. Hymns of praise to God were sung in pure, simple Bengalee, such as all could understand; one or two chapters from the Bible were read; and prayers offered, thanking God for all His kindness to the people, and asking Him for all the good they needed, both for this life and for the next. The special circumstances under which they met that day were not forgotten. The missionary prayed earnestly that the two who were now to devote themselves to the Saviour, might be kept faithful unto death, and that they might be the first-fruits of a large ingathering of the daughters of India to the Church

of Jesus Christ. Then he read a few words from the Holy Book, and explained and enforced the lessons they were meant to teach. Last came the holy rite of baptism. The two women stood up in front of the congregation. The missionary asked whether it was their hearty desire to renounce Hindooism, and to embrace the religion of Jesus Christ: and on their replying, "We do wish it," they received the sign of pure water in token of their trust in Him, whose blood purifies the heart from all sin. The missionary then prayed to God that His blessing, love, and peace might remain with them then and always; and the congregation dispersed to their homes.

Prosonno and Kaminee, with her sister, returned to Rám Doyal's house after the service. He and his wife were to go to their own home the next day. It was his wish not to enter it till his wife had been baptized, that it might be from the beginning consecrated as a Christian home, in which they should daily ask God to dwell. Shoudaminee had a little house near them where she was to live with her children, and in which she looked forward on the morrow, cheerfully and hopefully, to begin her new life.

Shoudaminee and her boy became earnest students. Kaminee, too, found learning pleasant work, now that she had her husband to teach her. She had no longer to make a secret of her wish and thirst for knowledge; he found as much pleasure in teaching her, as she had in learning, so that she made rapid progress; and with her household occupations of keeping her home in order and preparing her husband's meals, (which duty she resumed on entering her own house), her time passed very quickly and happily away.

It was some weeks after this, that Prosonno went one evening to a native chapel, with the missionary, to hear him preach to a heathen congregation. He was hoping, at some future time, to be specially set apart for the work of preaching to his countrymen; and he was endeavoring, by listening to the missionary's sermons, to gather hints as to the best mode of effective preaching. On his return, he met Nobo, who was taking a walk in that direction, and persuaded him to pay a visit to Kaminee and himself in their new home. He was much pleased with the comfort and order of its arrangements; and Kaminee was very glad to see him again. "I am so glad you came,

Nobo," she said to him, "that you may see how happy we are here. Since I became a Christian, I have been quite content."

"Yes," replied Nobo, "a woman is always happy with her husband. She has nothing to leave in comparison with him; but with us men it is very different. I could not be happy as a Christian, now, with all I should have to give up."

"Oh, I wish I could persuade you to try it!" exclaimed Prosonno. "We are so happy now that we are of one heart and mind. I give Kaminee a lesson every day, not only about religion, but on many other subjects, and she is an apt scholar. What a mistake it is that so many of our country-women should be left to grow up in ignorance."

"Perhaps it is," said Nobo; "but don't you think that learning much would make them neglect their household duties?"

"Why," answered Prosonno, smiling, "you have just been admiring the arrangement of our house, which is all Kaminee's doing; and for further answer, I wish you could come and taste her curries now. They seem to me to be better than ever."

Both the brothers were silent for a few moments. This little speech, trivial as it was, had made them feel what a cruel barrier Hindooism placed between those who were in many respects very near and dear to each other, a barrier so strong that one brother could not accept even the simplest hospitality from the other, without breaking one of the first rules of his religion.

After a pause Nobo said, "Well, perhaps you are right; I confess I wish sometimes I could be a Christian myself, but I cannot."

"Why not, brother?" asked Prosonno.

"I could never give up everything, as you did. Besides, now that Chondro is so extravagant, I am the only comfort our father has. It would break his heart if I left him. I dare not even tell him that I have been to see you."

"How I wish I could see him!" exclaimed Prosonno. "Is he much altered since I saw him?"

"Yes, he looks much older and sadder now. He has had many anxieties lately;" and Nobo related the vain attempt they had made to get Hemlota married. Then followed a long talk about family affairs. Prosonno made Nobo tell

him every little particular he could think of, and eagerly asked so many qusestions that no one who might have heard the conversation could have thought for a moment that Christianity had at all lessened his love for his own people. Nay, it had even strengthened and deepened his affection. Then, it was Nobo's turn to ask questions. He inquired after Shoudaminee and her children, who by this time were there to answer for themselves, as Kaminee had gone, while the brothers were talking, to fetch them in. Little Gopal was delighted to see his uncle. He immediately entered into a long story of his doings, his school, his playmates, and his new books. At last Nobo regretfully rose to go, but not before his brother had made him promise to come and see them as often as he could.

Nobo often came to see his brother when he could do so without his father's knowledge, and always received a hearty welcome. But he still remained undecided on the subject of religion. He knew the truth, and believed it in his heart; but he was doing what so many of his class in India are now doing—halting between two opinions. As he had confessed to his brother, he could

not make up his mind to become a Christian, and to give up everything for the truth; and so he never possessed the settled repose of mind that Prosonno and Kaminee enjoyed. As they had told him, now that they were of one heart, they were very happy; and before long their happiness was increased by the birth of a son, whom they hoped to train up as God should give them grace, to be His faithful servant till his life's end. Kaminee and her husband were very proud of their little treasure, and great was the rejoicing among their friends at the happy event.

"See how God has blessed us, my Kaminee," Prosonno said to his wife. "He taught me to know His truth, and to believe in it, and when I had almost given up hoping for it, He gave you back to me, a Christian wife: now He has completed our joy with this new blessing."

Prosonno was holding his child in his arms, and as Kaminee kissed her little darling, she said—

"Yes, He has indeed been good to us. Let us thank Him for it!" And then Prosonno prayed with her, that God would ever keep them thankful for all His love, and long spare them and their

child to each other, that they might live together a loving, happy Christian family.

Here we must leave our friends. We have followed some of them, through the mazes of Hindooism, into the straight but pleasant path of Christian life that leads to life everlasting. May many of the natives of India be induced to follow their example, to leave their dumb idols for the worship of the one living and true God! May He give them courage to cast aside the shackles that so long have held them, to profess what they believe in their hearts to be the truth, and to enrol themselves in the small but noble band of those to whom our Saviour has given the promise:—"Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come LIFE EVERLASTING!"

THE END.